COUNTRY WALKS
ABOUT
FLORENCE
EDWARD HUTTON

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COUNTRY WALKS ABOUT FLORENCE

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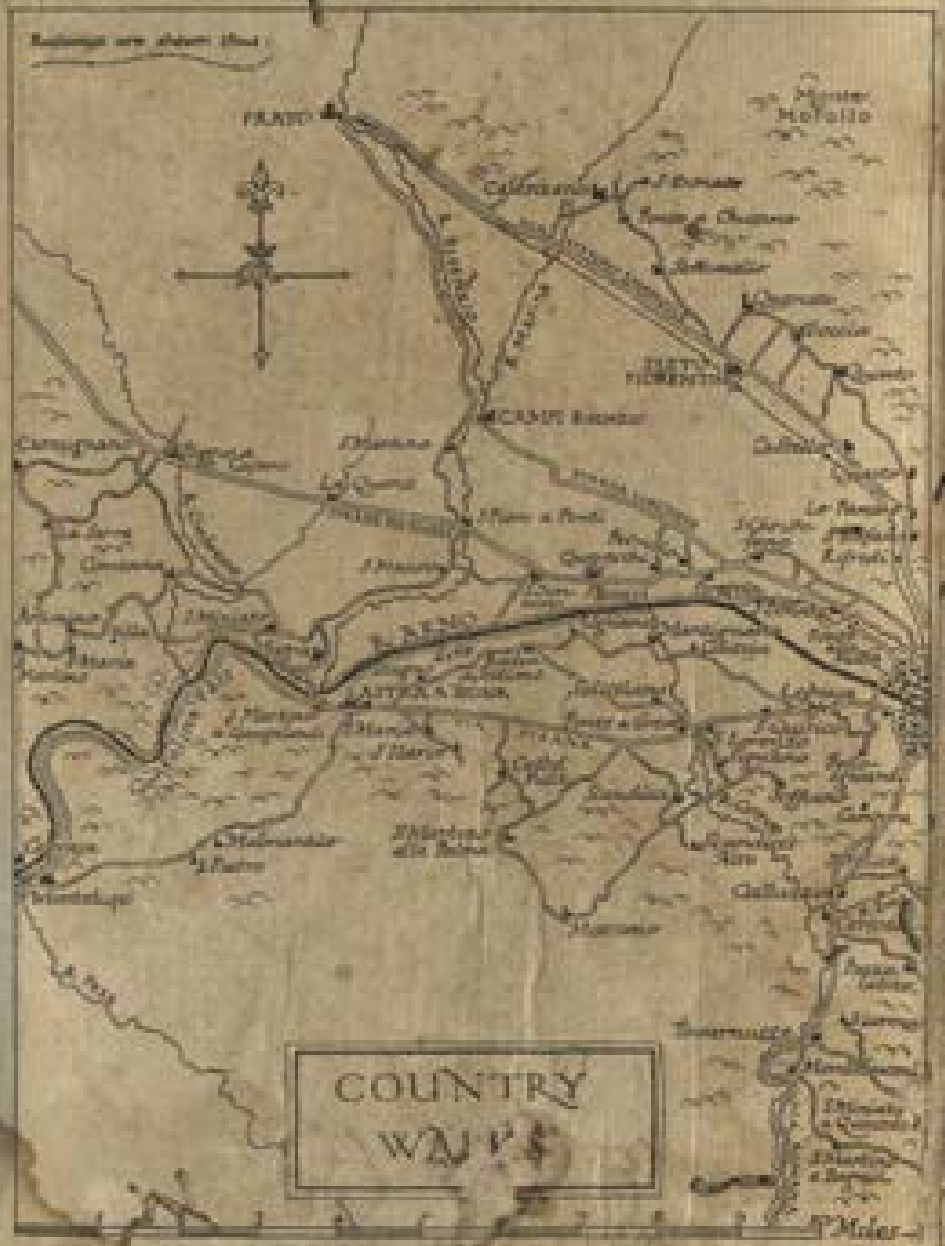
COUNTRY
ABOUT

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

FREDERIC UVEDALE: A Romance
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ITALY AND THE ITALIANS
THE CITIES OF UMBRIA
THE CITIES OF SPAIN
SIGISMONDO MALATESTA
FLORENCE AND NORTHERN TUSCANY
IN UNKNOWN TUSCANY
ROME
GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO
SIENA AND SOUTHERN TUSCANY
VENICE AND VENETIA

"IF YOU GIVE ME YOUR COMPANY YOU WILL LINGER IN THE VINEYARDS"

COUNTRY WALKS
ABOUT
FLORENCE

BY

EDWARD HUTTON
AUTHOR OF "FLORENCE AND NORTHERN TUSCANY"

60672
ac.

WITH THIRTY-TWO DRAWINGS BY ADELAIDE MARCHI
AND TWENTY OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS

SECOND EDITION

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FOR MY DEAR FRIEND

JANET ROSS

WITH LOVE

INTRODUCTION

THIS little book is the result of a spring and autumn spent on the Florentine hills, when the writer was suffering from a strange dis-ease of body and of soul, the result as it was thought of too eager a pursuit of his art, but in truth the payment that was demanded for a failure to achieve at the time what he most desired. Fallen into the hands of doctors (strange, unaccountable folk), forbidden to work, but encouraged to "distract himself," he began by devoting himself to a new exploration of Florence, and ended by disregarding her altogether for the country that lies about her.

For indeed it is true—why should we deny it any longer?—Florence is no more: there remains beside the Arno, between the hills where once Florence stood, the most beautiful museum in the world, the one city in Italy that seems to have lost all character, to be at various seasons almost English or German or American, and, save in the dog-days perhaps, never really Tuscan at all.

Well, her success has been prodigious; and she has sacrificed so much for it that one must not grudge her her small satisfactions. And then how lightly, how cheerfully, she has assumed her new rôle! There are no streets in any city south of the Apennines so clean as the Florentine ways; and when she builds new houses no city, even in Italy, is more contemptuous of the past or more eager to follow where we have led. And yet—for beauty is immortal—in spite of all these changes, though the electric trams rush round the Duomo and have quite spoiled a great part of the Lung' Arno, though nearly all the statues are fig-leaved and in prison, and the pictures are invisible because of the crowds which follow some jackanapes quoting Browning, Florence remains one of the loveliest of the dead things of Italy—yes, a beautiful museum full of priceless masterpieces.

But there came a night when I was weary of the city: all day the churches had given me no gift of peace, the galleries seemed full of dead things, the pictures old and vain with praise—their charm lost in that attitude they seem gradually to have assumed before the gaping tourists. I was weary of it all: only the night was sweet to me and full of mystery, and the wind among the cypresses above Corbignano answering the thunder in the hills.

What was the desire in my heart that had

made so fair a thing as Florence of no account? It was that question which had driven me mad, which had confused the unaccountable doctors, and which I myself could not, or dared not, answer. This is the ghost in my life which for ever goes along with me smiling enigmatically, pathetically, as of old, in the labyrinth of my heart. And to it I can give no utterance; for coming within the inexpressible light of that remembrance I am like one trapped in a whirlwind, able only to whisper a vague immortal name.

For many days I followed you, dear ghost, and then came one who drew me out of the whirlwind, and in her beautiful palace, where the ladies of the *Decameron* told the deplorable, delicious tales which have always delighted the world, she lured me back with songs to the appearance we call reality, and for that and for a thousand other gifts beside I have dared to write her name in this little book, and to give it her, not that it is worthy or such as I would give her if I might choose, but that she will prefer it, knowing what it is.

Now, when she had cured me I began to go into the lanes, into the woods, into the little villages among the children, back into the world —a new world. For I left the city for the country for this cause and in this manner to make me well. Then I walked through the

by-ways from village to village, from church to church, from shrine to shrine, from oratory to oratory. You will see that sometimes I went by the rivers, sometimes by the valleys, sometimes by the hills. Often I kept to the highway because it was nobler than the fields, but often I left it at its best, for the by-ways were more beautiful than the road. If you give me your company you will linger in the vineyards, you will hear songs, you will see the olives silver in the wind, you will stoop to the flowers, you will make haste slowly because of the beauty of the day, and you will not think of hurry because of the beauty of the night. I am for quietness of sun and shade, between the cypresses I shall lead you from peace to peace, and you will dream of an old renown.

E. H.

CASA DI BOCCACCIO
October, 1907

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"BETWEEN THE CYPRESSES I SHALL LEAD YOU FROM PEACE TO PEACE"

COUNTRY WALKS ABOUT FLORENCE

I

IN BOCCACCIO'S COUNTRY

THE road to Ponte a Mensola, to Settignano, between the *poderi* walls, outside the *barriera* is one of the pleasantest about Florence; and it is by this road we shall do well to pass first, on our way to explore that smiling country, which beckons us down the vista of every street in the city; perhaps for Boccaccio's sake, for he loved it well, as I have done, but certainly for our own, because, in spite of the tramway, it is a quiet way, winding between the vineyards, bordered with the iris and the rose, like a stream almost on its way from the hills.

And it is that most ancient torrent Affrico which you meet at the gate, at what, in modern Italy has, alas, taken the place of the gate, the iron *barriera*, where the peasants, little groups of them, wait anxiously with their baskets of country stuff, their little bundles of herbs, their carts of hay, with here a barrel of wine, there a load of poor household things, among which as among the ruins of a world, a little dog barks furiously unhappy, a little child sleeps as it were in Madonna's arms, while the State takes toll of their

meagre earnings.[1] For those who have not been ashamed to rob the nuns and to cast them out on the streets will have no scruple, we may be sure, as to their right to tax the very poorest, the hard labour of the fields, the half-starved peasant of the hills.

Here by Affrico, where this sordid and sluggish business now gets itself done, indifferently enough we may be sure, in 1307 Corso Donati was slain. They took him as he fled, after a day's fighting in defence of Borgo degli Albizzi. On his way back to the city he had lost, weary with flight and war, he slipped from his horse, here by Affrico, and the Catalan guards, thinking it was but another ruse to escape, killed him with their lances as he lay in the dust, an old man heavy with armour and gout. Then, perhaps afraid of what they had done, they left him there; and the monks of S. Salvi across the stream, carried the body into the church and later buried him. Four years later his body was borne away to Florence by his friends.

S. Salvi is now a public monument: the Vallombrosan monks are gone these thirty years, and instead, a Government official, as at the *Dazio*, is set on watch, lest you should see for nothing the *Cenacolo* of Andrea del Sarto which modern Italy stole from the Religious.

But these are not country thoughts; they come to us only now and then when in a moment of pity or indignation the remembrance of old or new wrongs returns to us: the brutal exploitation of the weak by the strong, the vengeance of the ignoble on the

[1] "It is progressive taxation turned topsy-turvy," says Professor Villari; "the less a man has the more he pays." Fifty-four per cent. of the taxes fall on the poor and working classes. The State takes 17 per cent. as against 6 per cent. in England of the income of the country.

humble and meek, the mediocrity that is modern Italy. Here, where even yet the ways are set with flowers, and the old olives are whispering together in the gardens, we leave Italy of to-day behind her iron bars, and come into the Italy of our dreams, that land which Chaucer loved, which taught Spenser to sing, of whose loves and hates Shakespeare has told us, down whose ways Byron rode with Shelley, in whose lap Keats preferred to lie. And in such a land, truly the garden of the world, it is not for long that the tram will hold us. For after leaving the *barriera*, that abused machine swerves rudely to the right along a country road, rushes through Fontebuoni, a mere group of houses in the valley, and then winding under the hill of Poggio Gherardo comes at last to Ponte a Mensola, that village by the wayside where we are free.

Casale del Ponte a Mensola is a tiny hamlet, scarcely more than a handful of houses, founded probably by the Betti, who, with the Zati, were long ago the *Signori* of this neighbourhood. It is not, however, any relic of their power or riches long since passed away, that to-day persuades us to linger at the foot of the hill of Settignano, but one of the most beautiful, and for us certainly one of the most interesting, village churches in Tuscany, S. Martino a Mensola, Boccaccio's parish church.

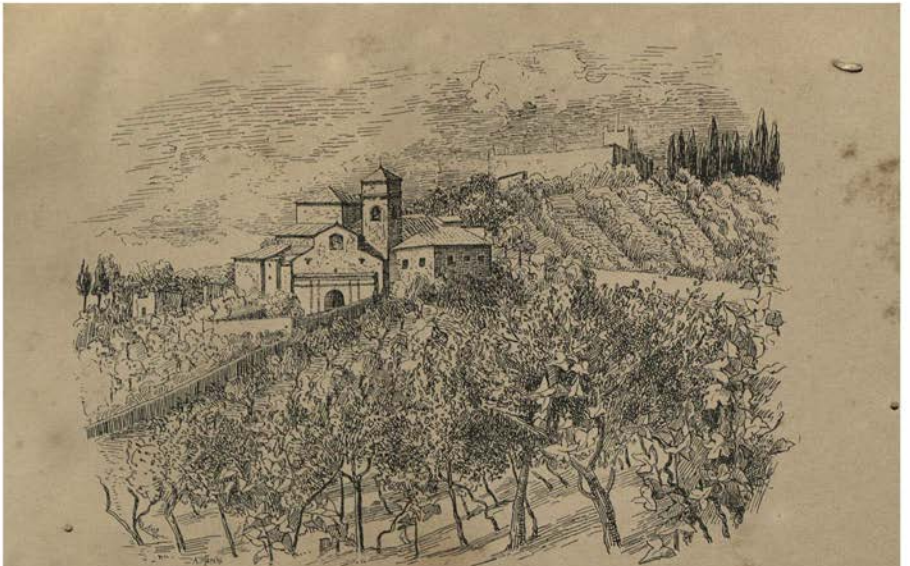
Like the stream of Mensola over which it broods, S. Martino owes its birth to Fiesole: and standing as it does on the slope of Poggio Gherardo, it looks radiantly up at Vincigliata, across the valley to Corbignano, to the monastery under Settignano and to Settignano itself, whose white bell-tower of S. Mary is just visible from the courtyard.

Nothing, indeed, that we may see from the outside suggests at all the antiquity of the church, which, existing in some sort, probably as an oratory, in the

tenth century, was founded in truth by one of our own countrymen—S. Andrea di Scozia, as Puccinelli[1] tells us. For it seems that when S. Donato of Scotland was Bishop of Fiesole, he had for archdeacon one of his own nation, Andrew by name, who, as he wandered one day through the woods by Mensola, came upon a little ruined oratory dedicated to S. Martino. Seeing it roofless, the walls broken down and full of weeds and thorns, on his return he threw himself at the feet of Donato, begging the place of him as a gift; and obtaining it, at once began to rebuild it. And he begged so well of the people round about, that before long he was able to raise there not only a church, but even a small monastery, where he soon placed a few companions who took the rule of S. Benedict. Later they elected Andrew to be their abbot and Donato, who consecrated the church, gave them the habit. Notwithstanding this election Andrew seems still to have held his office of archdeacon, dwelling with his monks at S. Martino and going up to Fiesole especially for the ceremonies in the Duomo.

A miracle, or something like it, is recorded of him. It seems that he had a sister still in Scotland, and when he came to die he felt that he could not be content without a sight of her; and she, Bridget was her name, immediately stood before him, with some fish she had just caught—in Tees perhaps, ah, so much lovelier than Arno—in her hands. Then he told her how he had wished to see her and how God had granted him his wish, so that he might die happily. And, indeed, not long after, he breathed his last in

[1] *Cf.* Puccinelli, *Cronaca della Badia Fiorentina*, cap. 48. And for much of interest concerning the church and parish, *cf.* Anon. (? Baroni), *La Parrochia di S. Martino a Mensola* (Firenze Tip. Militare di T. Giuliani, 1866).



S. MARTINO A MENSOLA

his sister's arms. And the people round about brought those who were possessed of evil spirits, and those who were blind, and those who were any way sick, and as many as touched his body, as it is said, were made whole. So they buried him in the midst of the church.

Now, however this may be, it is certain that in the latter part of the eleventh century the monastery had become a convent: and about the same time the church seems to have been rebuilt by Abbot Pietro II. of the Badia of Florence.[1] Nothing further, however, is known of the church before 1281, when Ildeprando, son of Burnetto degli Alfani, left twenty-five *libras florenorum parvorum* for rebuilding it.[2] And it may well have been then that the nuns found the bones of S. Andrea which, as Puccinelli tells us, they had sought so long. For it seems that the nuns, desiring to know in what part of the church S. Andrea's body lay—and they had prayed long to know—in 1285, a married lady, noble too, being dead, who was rich also and rarely beautiful, but suddenly deformed and full of sickness, was carried into the midst of the church. In that night S. Andrea appeared to the chaplain or confessor, with a jovial face and serene, telling him to lift away the dead lady from his grave for she annoyed him. And the chaplain, thinking it only a dream, put it out of his mind and thought no more of it. But again on the following night S. Andrea appeared, with a severe countenance, and spoke shrewdly to the chaplain, who in fear and doubt did not dare either to speak of what he had

[1] Pietro II. was created Abbot of the Badia Fiorentina about 1060; *cf.* Lami, *Ecc. Flor. Mon.*, *c.*, 971.

[2] *Arch. Dipl. Fior. Carte* di S. Maria Novella. "Item Ecclesie Sancti Martini ad Mensolam pro restauratione decimarum et fabrica dicte ecclesie libras vigintiquinque florenorum parvorum."

dreamed, or to carry out the order of the saint. Then on the third night also S. Andrea appeared to him, with a disdainful face and a whip in his hand, so that for fear the monk could not rise from his bed. Nor even at dawn did he rise to say Mass, till at last, coming somewhat to himself, though still sorely frightened, he appeared before the abbess, the sweat pouring down his face, and his mouth open. She, with two nuns beside her, hearing the tale, bade him at once to say Mass while she and the whole nunnery set themselves to pray to their holy protector Andrea. Now when Mass was said, the chaplain, good man, rose from his knees, his face as it were covered with a dream, and scarce knowing what he did, lifting the dead lady he carried her into the *cimitero*, and then, still as though in a trance, returning to the church he dug some *braccia* deep in the place where till then she had been laid, and there was the very *Cassa* of the holy bones of Andrea which so long they had sought in vain. Then bringing lights, and sounding the bells, they bore it within the convent, giving it honourable burial amidst a great concourse of people, and not without accompanying miracles.

To-day the body of S. Andrea lies under the high altar of the church where it was placed, not without pomp, in 1804.

The rest of the story of the church amounts, indeed, to very little. There is a tradition, which we have no right to doubt, that the nave was rebuilt between 1300 and 1360; but certainly in the beginning of the fifteenth century—it is possible that Sir John Hawkwood sacked the place when he harried the Florentines in 1364 and is said to have destroyed the Castle of Vincigliata—it was again in ruin and the convent almost deserted. It is at this time we hear of it in connection with the name of the great Florentine saint, Archbishop An-

tonino. For the Pope in a Bull of 22nd December, 1450,[1] committed it to him, and he, at the request of the monks of the Badia Fiorentina, gave it again into their charge. The monks, however, had not money enough to rebuild it,[2] so that they petitioned the Pope to be allowed to invest the priest Jacopo di Santi di Giovanni with the perpetual title, which he allowed.[3] This priest, Jacopo, proposed to restore it himself, which he seems to have done, for it was certainly between 1450 and 1475 that it got its present aspect, perhaps, as indeed seems likely enough, from the very hands of Brunelleschi himself. And, though in 1837 it suffered a not too disastrous restoration, it is a fifteenth century church still, as indeed we see as soon as we enter the beautiful pillared nave.

Unless one happens to come to San Martino on a Festa, or very early in the morning, it is necessary to pass through the Canonica to gain admittance. Within, you find yourself in a church of three naves, divided by eight arches, borne by columns, while over the altar is another and greater arch, all in the style of the fifteenth century. The church has many pictures, simple country things full of the beauty of wild flowers, and all it might seem by rare and little-known painters. Were they of the countryside? Did they perhaps come

[1] It was Nicholas V. who knew Florence very well, having been twice tutor there in his youth. *Cf.* also Lami, *op. cit.*, c. 973.

[2] Of old the portico bore the inscription in English, "*Help, Help Ghot,*" which may well have dated from S. Andrea's time. It seems to have disappeared after the fifteenth century restoration. *Cf.* Anon. (? Baroni), *op. cit.*

[3] The brief is Nicholas the Fifth's, dated 12th March, 1451. Jacopo di Santi di Giovanni de' Santi was a Canon of S. Lorenzo and in 1460 *primo Rettore del canonica della casa de' Medici dal lato di Cafaggiolo, Abate* of S. Egidio and *Spedalingo* of S. M. Nuova. He died Sept., 1472. *Cf. Arch. della Badia*, t. i., *Memorandum*, c. 206, and Anon. (? Baroni), *op. cit.*, p. 18.

down from Settignano, where Desiderio was born, or through the olive gardens from Maiano, where Benedetto spent his childhood, or through the vineyards from Rovezzano, not far from the river, where another Benedetto was born? Or did they come out from the city —as indeed they do still—to see a country procession, for Corpus Christi maybe, or the Feast of the Assumption, and lingering in so sweet, so quiet a place, leave behind for just country people some simple thing such as they could love, the Annunciation of our Lady perhaps, and since the birds sang so sweetly there as Boccaccio knew—

> Era in quel tempo del mese di Maggio
> Quando i be' prati rilucon di fiori
> E gli usignuoli per ogni rivaggio
> Manifestan con canti i loro amori,[1]

or Madonna on a country throne among the flowers, and in her arms Bambino Gesù, playing with a nightingale, such as we see there to-day? Yet it was not always thus that these pictures, so fortunately anonymous—for be sure if they bore a name that the critics knew by heart, or that would bring a few lire into the *Uffizi*, they would have been stolen away long ago—came to be painted. Certain great or notable gentlemen possessed the country round about. The Signore Amerigo Zati, who has hung his arms over the chancel arch, must have a picture painted for his country church, Madonna enthroned with Saints and Angels, Bambino Gesù in her lap, and under, who but himself, kneeling there on the steps, as he had done at Easter, doubtless, many a time. Looking at the picture to-day, there behind the high

[1] Boccaccio, *Ninfale Fiesolano*, parta i., st. xviii. Sung of this very place: For that too little-known poem is concerned with all this country and the loves of Affrico and Mensola, its quiet streams.

Alinari

THE ANNUNCIATION

From the picture by Guisto d'Andrea in the Church of S. Martino a Mensola

altar, a triptych in which, on a gold ground, Madonna, in the midst, presents her little Son, whom she holds in her arms, with a brown bird, while on her left stand S. Giuliano and S. Amerigo, and on her right Amerigo Zati, the donor, kneels in adoration, you might almost fancy it a work of Orcagna or his pupils.[1] On the left are S. Maria Maddelena with the vase of ointment, S. Niccolò Bishop of Mira, and S. Caterina with the palm of martyrdom: on the right S. Martino, S. Gregorio, and S. Antonio, while above, in the cusps, are Moses, David, Noah, and Joshua, and under, the Archangel and Madonna at Annunciation. In the *gradino* on either side you see the arms of the donor, and between the stories of S. Caterina and of S. Niccolò, a Pietà with Madonna and S. Giovanni and the story of S. Martino, of S. Gregorio; and under, the date *MCCCLXXXXI Octobre.*

But this is not the only wonder in the church. In the Chapel of the Annunciation, to the left of the high altar, is a picture of the Annunciation somewhat in the manner of Angelico: where at dawn, in a garden, the angel steals through the shadow to Madonna praying under a loggia, and in a moment the Day-Spring has crept into the world. An inscription on the hem of Mary's robe seems to hide the name of the painter—could one but read it.[2]

And then in the Chapel of S. Antonio to the right of the chancel there is a triptych in which Madonna is enthroned with the Jesus Parvulus on her knees, and in His hand again that brown bird: on the left stands a virgin, and on the right S. Orsola, bearing a cross and trampling on a dragon as in the story: while in the cusps we may see, under a frieze of saints and

[1] Mr. Berenson tells me it is a work of Bernardo Orcagna.
[2] Mr. Berenson tells me it is a work of Giusto d'Andrea.

cherubim, S. Agostino and S. Stefano with our Lord blessing us in the midst: and in the *gradino*, the Annunciation and Pietà, with donors and the martyrdom of S. Orsola and her virgins.[1]

Over the last altar in the north aisle stands a picture painted in 1474 attributed to Neri di Bicci, in which on a gold ground you see Madonna enthroned with her little Son, who plays with a swallow, while beside them stand S. Francis and S. John Baptist, S. Mary Magdalen and S. Clare. In the *gradino* you find Tobias and the angel, a Pietà with Madonna and the Magdalen on either side, and S. Niccolò praying on his knees with a *bambino* gathered under his cloak.

Opposite, in the south aisle, there is a much damaged picture of Madonna with our Lord between S. Andrea and S. Sebastian, attributed to Cosimo Rosselli. Almost anonymous as these pictures really are, and without the fame of many a painting less lovely, they are just country flowers by the wayside, and such indeed are the joy of Tuscany. Where else in the world can one find such things strewn along a country road in the by-ways among the olives and the vines? They lighten our hearts, and in their country silence remind us, a little sadly perhaps, of that Italy which we have always loved and which has passed away.

It is not, however, any church, be it never so beautiful or holy, that will hold us for long on a day in May in this laughing country about Florence, where the olives whisper to the roses that hem them in, and the roses mingle with the iris, and the iris with the corn. And indeed we are come—is it not so?—to spend a day with Boccaccio, to follow him through the woods and the meadows from Mensola to Affrico. His footsteps

[1] This has been attributed, most doubtfully I think, to Agnolo Gaddi.

are still to be found on these hills by those who love him well enough to look for them; northward and west through Valle delle Donne under Monte Ceceri that bare hill, hidden from S. Martino by the olive gardens, between Vincigliata and Fiesole, and Villa Palmieri on the lower slopes under S. Domenico, over the city.

So returning a little on the way, as far as Mensola and crossing the bridge there, you follow the stream a little way up the left bank, turning to the right when you may, uphill towards the village of Corbignano. Before long you will come on that stony road to a house on your right hand, with two *logge* half smothered in roses and a little shrine of Madonna of the Swords. Casa di Boccaccio they call the place, but of old it was named Buonriposo, and before that Corbignano, and there Boccaccio's boyhood was passed. Perhaps by the courtesy of the owner of the place you will stay a little in the garden and see the beautiful courtyard with its old well and the ruined frescoes that may still be traced on the walls of what was once the tower, and the broken inscriptions. Then, lingering a little in so beautiful and so quiet a place, under the olives, perhaps you will think of Boccaccio.

Nearly all modern writers on Boccaccio are in agreement with Crescini, who seems to have proved that Boccaccio was born in Paris in 1313, the son of a young French woman between nobility and *bourgeoisie*, called Giannina or Jeanne, and the Florentine merchant Boccaccio di Chellino. "His father," Filippo Villani[1] tells us, "was Boccaccio of Certaldo, a village of the Florentine dominion; he was a man distinguished by excellence of manners. The course of his commercial affairs brought him to Paris,

[1] *Vite d. Ill. Fior.*, lib. ix., articolo Templari. See also Baldelli, *Vita di Giovanni Boccacci* (Firenze, 1806), p. 271; and best of all Crescini, *Contributo agli Studi sul Boccaccio* (Torino, 1887).

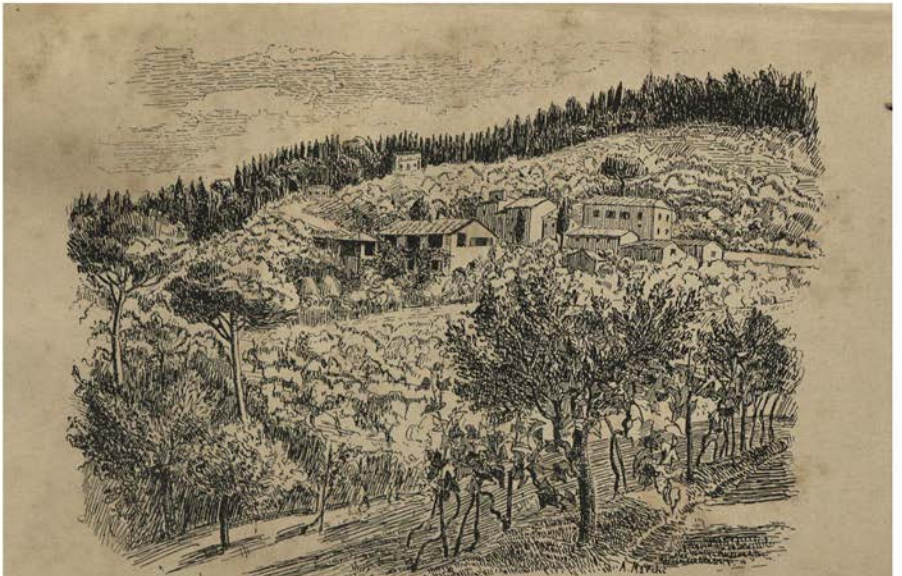
where he resided for a season, and being free and pleasant in the temper of his mind, was no less gay and well-inclined to love by the complexion of his constitution. There, then, it befell that he was inspired with love for a girl of Paris, belonging to the class between nobility and *bourgeoisie* for whom he conceived the most violent passion; and, as the admirers of Giovanni assert, she became his wife and afterwards the mother of Giovanni."[1]

As his admirers assert! But others say that Boccaccio never married her at all, while Suares, Bishop of Vaison, tells us that he saw a deed for Giovanni's legitimisation by Papal authority, at Avignon in the seventeenth century. And, to make confusion worse confounded, Giovanni Acquettini makes Boccaccio say in a sonnet, written apparently "at the end of the fourteenth century": "I was born at Florence at Pozzo Toscanelli and now lie buried in Certaldo".[2]

In all this confusion it is difficult to find one's way. All we know for certain is that Petrarch asserts that Giovanni told him he was born in 1313. If we accept that fact then we must admit that he was born in Paris, for Crescini has proved beyond doubt that Boccaccio di Chellino was in Paris in 1313. This romantic French birth is also borne out by Boccaccio's own works, in those parts of the *Ameto* and the *Filocolo* where he seems to be speaking of himself under various disguises. That the *Ameto*, that little known poem, contains the secret of Boccaccio's love for Fiametta is well known, and there speaking of her he tells us that her mother was of French origin and that

[1] Domenico Aretino also says (*Rime del Bocc.*, p. xxxiii.): "Boccatius pater ejus . . . amavit quamdam iuventulam Parisinam, quam, prout diligentes Ioannem dicunt, quamquam alia communior sit opinio sibi postea uxorem fecit, ex qua genitus est Ioannes".

[2] J. A. Symonds, *Giovanni Boccaccio* (London, 1895), p 97.



CORBIGNANO

he himself was born not far from the place where she first saw the light.[1] It seems certain then that he was born in Paris and it is probable that he was brought still a tiny baby to Florence, but we cannot be sure of this, for though his father seems to have returned in 1314 and not more than four years later married Margherita di Gian Donato de' Martoli, it is not certain that Giovanni accompanied him. However that may be, he was "in his first infancy" when he came into Tuscany as he tells us in the *Ameto*, "fanciullo cercai i regni Etrurii". The first river he saw was the Arno, "mihi, ante alios omnes (fluvios) ab ipsa infantia cognitus," and his boyhood was spent on that little hill described in the *Filocolo*, "piccolo poggio pieno di marine chiocciola," and covered with "salvatichi cerri," in the house of his father, "nel suo grembo," as he says in the *Fiametta*. Where was this hill dark with oaks where one might find sea-shells, the tiny shells of sea-snails? We do not know for certain. Some have thought it to be the hill of Certaldo, but this seems scarcely likely, for we know that old Boccaccio was resident in Florence in 1318, and Boccaccio himself tells us that his boyhood was spent not in a house belonging to his father but "nel suo grembo," literally in his father's lap. Again the country which he loved best and has described with the greatest love and enthusiasm is that between the village of Settignano and the city of Fiesole, north and east of Florence.

All Boccaccio's work proves, and he himself asserts, that his childhood was spent in the country round Florence, under Fiesole. As if unable to forget the lines of just these hills, the shadows in the woods here the darkness of the cypresses over the olives, it is always to this country he returns in thought wherever

[1] "Io, nato non molto lontano dai luoghi, onde trasse origine la tua madre. . . ."

he may be, in the *Ameto* or in the *Ninfale Fiesolano* or in the *Decamerone*. And, indeed, any doubt of his presence here is dismissed by a document discovered by Gherardi,[1] which proves that on the 10th May, 1336, by a contract drawn up by Ser Salvi di Dino, Messer Boccaccio di Chellino da Certaldo lately dwelling in the parish of S. Pier Maggiore and then in that of S. Felicità, sold to Niccolò di Vegna, who bought for Niccolò, the son of Paolo his nephew, the *podere* with houses called Corbignano, partly in the Parish of S. Martino a Mensola and partly in that of S. Maria a Settignano.[2] This was the property Margherita had brought to him as dowry.

Of his childhood, till, as one may believe, he went to Naples in 1323, when he was ten years old, we know very little. Before he was seven years old, as he himself tells us, he was set to learn to read and write. Then he was placed in the care of Giovanni di Domenico Mazzuoli da Strada, father of the more famous Zanobi, to begin the study of "grammatica". But presently his father, who had already destined him for a merchant, took him from these studies and made him give his time to "Arismetrica," and took him into

[1] See Roberto Gherardi, *La Villeggiatura di Maiano*, cap. iv. This is a MS. conserved by the heirs of the author, some time owner of Poggio Gherardo. Through the kindness of Mrs. Ross, the present possessor of that beautiful and famous place, I have been able to see a copy of it, to which indeed I owe all I have been able to say of Casa di Boccaccio. Gherardi, arguing from the *Ameto*, suggests that Boccaccio was born there. In the Prologue to that *Commedia*, Boccaccio says: "*Vagabondo giovine i Fauni e le Driadi abitatori del luogo* (that is, the woods under Fiesole) *solea visitare; et elli forse dagli vicini monti avuta antica origine, quasi da carnalità costretto, di ciò avendo memoria con pietosi affetti gli onorava talvolta*".

[2] The contract which is printed in full in Anon. (? Baroni), *op. cit.*, doc. vi., minutely describes the *poderi*. There can be no doubt of the fact which tradition supports that Casa di Boccaccio is the place described.

CASA DI BOCCACCIO

his hunting-house. His childhood seems to have been not very happy, chiefly by reason of the jealousy of his stepmother Margherita. In all his allegories he never speaks of the city in connection with his childhood, but always of the country. Thus it seems likely that he spent much of his boyhood here in Corbignano and knew and loved every hill and valley and stream in the country round about.[1] And if in Casa di Boccaccio to-day you can find little enough that remains from the time of Boccaccio, part of the old tower that has been broken down and turned into a loggia, here a ruined fresco, there a spoiled inscription, yet through the trees on the hill beyond Mensola, Poggio Gherardo rises still before its cypresses, well, almost as it may have appeared to Giovanni who, from this very place, must often have looked across the vineyards and the olive gardens to that old and beautiful palace of the hill. Even in Boccaccio's day was it not "one of those country seats, of which we have so many," which Pampinea speaks of in the opening pages of the *Decamerone?* And indeed at her suggestion it was thither those seven ladies and three gentlemen (of whom as Neifile reminds us, though we are like to forget it, "no one can say anything but good") fled away from the plague-stricken city on that Wednesday morning in May, 1348. "For there," Pampinea tells her friends, Fiametta, Filomena, Lauretta and the rest, "there we shall hear the song of birds, there we shall see the hills and valleys in all the sweetness of Spring and the cornfields waving like the sea itself; and there are the trees we love and the open sky which in that place, though it may seem for a while to be angry with us, does not long hide its beauty from us, and which is so much more lovely seen from the

[1] In the prologue to the book of rivers he speaks of Arno first: "*quia patriae flumen et mihi ante alios omnes ab ipsa infantia cognitus*".

country than from within this deserted city. Besides, the air is fresher there, and bread and milk and wine are plentiful, and we shall see, ah, fewer mournful sights. Yes, the country-folk die there as well as the citizens of the town, yet because they will be further from us it will not wring our hearts so sore." So they set out.

"As soon as everything was ready . . . the next morning, which was Wednesday, as the day was breaking, the ladies with various of their serving-maids, and the three youths with three of their followers, left the town and went on their way. They had not gone more than two short miles from the city when they came to the place they had already decided on. This was on a small height removed a little distance from our roads on every side,[1] full of various trees and shrubs in full greenery and most pleasant to behold. On the brow of the hill was a palace with a fine and spacious courtyard in the middle and with loggias and halls and rooms all, and each one in itself, beautiful and ornamented tastefully with jocund paintings. It was surrounded too with grass plots and marvellous gardens and with wells of coldest water, and there were cellars of rare wines, a thing perhaps more suited to curious topers than to quiet and virtuous ladies. And the palace was clean and in good order, the beds prepared and made, and everything decorated with spring flowers, and the floors covered with rushes all much to their satisfaction."

There Pampinea was crowned Queen "with an honourable and beautiful garland of laurel," and here at her command Panfilo began the immortal series of tales we know as the *Decamerone.*

[1] In the fourteenth century nothing but a mule track led to Settignano under Poggio Gherardo. The nearest roads must have been the Via Aretina Nuova by Arno, and the road to Fiesole.

The story of Poggio Gherardo, however, goes back further than 1348. In 1321, it seems, Meglino di Jacopo di Magaldo Magaldi, the possessor of the place died "leaving by will part of this ancient possession of his family, to wit, 'the *podere* of Poggio and the buildings above the said *podere* where now are, and have been in times gone by, the loggia, the tower, the well, the water channels, the courtyard and all the garden and orchard with the fields and *pergole* which are enclosed and surrounded in part by walls, etc.,' to the Congregation of the Visitation; with the obligation to build an *oratorio* or a chapel in the said house in honour of S. Zebedeus and to support a resident priest to say Mass every day for the repose of his soul". The Magaldi family, however, did not like the terms of the Will and they brought the affair before the Papal Court at Avignon, begging for leave to sell the place which many then, as now, would have liked to buy, *cum sit in loco carissimo situatum.* The Pope heard them and granted them their suit, partly in order that the daily Mass might be said, for the family pleaded poverty. So on 14th January, 1331, the place was sold for 3,100 golden florins to Messer Bivigliano del già Manetto de' Baroncelli and his brother Messer Silvestro. The Baroncelli did not enjoy it for long, for they were involved in the bankruptcy of the Acciajuoli—the greatest banking house in Florence—in 1345. The place seems then to have passed to the Albizzi, and it may have been Pampinea Albizzi who was crowned Queen there, as Boccaccio relates in 1348—and that would make her one of the ancestry of the divine Vanna of the Bargello, whom also I have loved. The Albizzi seem in their turn to have sold the place in 1354 to Andrea di Sennino Baldesi and then in 1400 the Zati held it, till in 1433 they sold it to Gherardo di Bartolommeo

Gherardi, whose people held it for four hundred and fifty-five years, till, indeed, Mr. H. I. Ross bought it from them in 1888.

"The entrance hall," says Mrs. Ross, from whose account of the place I have quoted, "is the 'Loggia' mentioned in the *Decamerone*, the arches of which were built up two or three hundred years ago. In the courtyard, the well, eighty feet deep, 'of coldest water,' still exists; but, alas, the 'jocund paintings' in the rooms have disappeared."

But, indeed, we have lingered long enough even in so lovely a place as this old garden of Casa di Boccaccio; our walk lies before us—our walk on which Messer Giovanni has delayed us so long that it must needs be, he will go along with us through his own woods to Villa Palmieri.

Leaving, then, Casa di Boccaccio in his company we mount the hill, continuing a few paces on our way till, turning suddenly to the left into the village of Corbignano, we follow the narrow street between the houses and, once more in the fields, mount up to the woods following the steepest way so far as the little Sanatorium. Then turning into the path to the left on the brow of the hill, winding in and out among the cypresses, with many a glimpse of the valley and the city so beautiful from here, we come to the little stream of Fossinaia, leaping on its way to join Mensola, in whose arms it is borne down to Arno. Crossing the stream and following the path to the left up to the road, which we follow too ever upwards, after some half a mile in the sweet scent and silence of the cypress woods, we come to a turning, down into the valley, on the left — the upper valley of Mensola. Following this road downwards over the stones, it soon turns suddenly across the stream, where a little mill breaks the spare waters over a wheel under the bare

sides of Monte Ceceri. The road turns to the left here under that barren hill where often you may hear the quarryman blasting the sullen rock that has built so much of Florence and Vincigliata too, of which, now that we have crossed the valley, we catch a glimpse among the trees on the hill we have left. And there are flowers there too, beside the stream, the wild flowers of Tuscany, and is it not Boccaccio himself who sings to us:—

Era in quel tempo del mese di maggio
Quando i be'prati rilucon di fiori,
E gli usignuoli per ogni rivaggio
Manifestan con canti i loro amori,
E' giovinetti con lieto coraggio
Senton d'amore più caldi i vapori,
Quando la Dea Diana a Fiesol venne
E con le ninfe sue consiglio tenne.

Intorno ad una bella e chiara fonte
Di fresche erbette e di fiori adornata,
La quale ancor dimora appiè del monte
Cecer, da quella parte ove 'l sol guata
Quand' è nel mezzo giorno a fronte a fronte
E fonte Aqueli è oggi nominata:
Intorno a quella Diana allor si volse
Essere, e molte ninfe vi raccolse.

Well, it is the very place.

But ah! Mæcenas is yclad in claye
And great Augustus long ygoe is dead. . . .

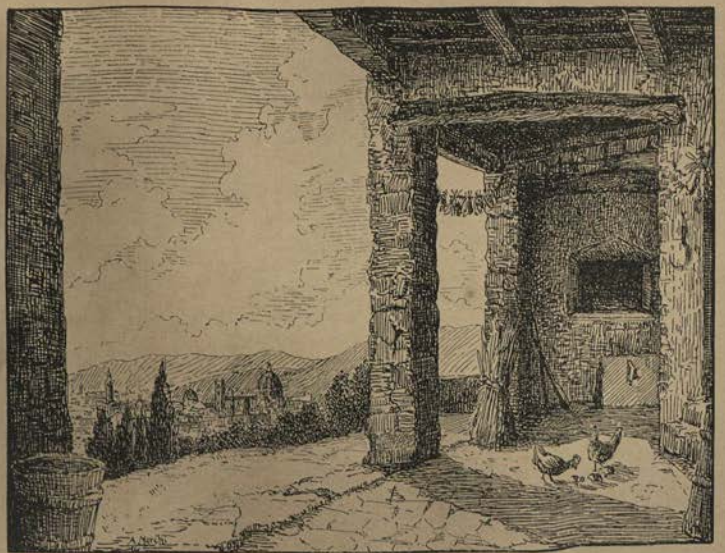
Diana hunts no more in the cool woods at dawn, and the nymphs who would not wait for Giovanni, will they, think you, return for us, though we too cry on this very morning half in tears, yet ashamed of our joy,

. . . aspettatemi un poco
O belle ninfe, ascoltate il mio dire:
Sappiate ch'io non venni in questo loco
Per voi noiare o per farvi morire,

Ma sol per darvi e allegrezza e gioco,
In quanto voi non vogliate fuggire:
Io vengo a voi come di voi amico
E voi fuggite me come nemico.

Ah, they hear us not: and so, presently following the way uphill and then downwards into the group of houses, without a shop or even an inn, called Maiano, we pass, on the left, a church, S. Martino a Maiano, restored now almost out of recognition, but charming enough there by the wayside, behind its green plot, to make us linger in its shadow. And indeed, restored though it be, that little church is old enough, standing there as it has done, it and its fathers, since the eleventh century.[1] It has been suggested that this may be one of the nine hundred and ninety churches which the Contessa Matilda caused to be founded in Tuscany. It was attached to a convent and seems to have fallen down on S. Bartholomew's Day at sunset in 1477 in a great storm, as Suor Bartolomea says in her prayer to God and S. Martino for help. Possibly it was then that the choir was rebuilt, the tower certainly dates from about that time; but it suffered other restorations in 1554, 1669 and 1820 and in the later nineteenth century. Of all the works of art which the church is said once to have possessed few remain, and they are for the most part of the late

[1] Nevertheless the oldest memory of it I can hear of, is in the year 1477. It is as follows: "MCCCCLXXVII. Al Nome di Dio Amen. *Io suor Bartolomea farò memoria della spesa farò nella chiesa, la quale chadde per gran fortuna di tempo al dì proprio di San Bartolommeo, in sulla ventitre ore chadde la chiesa, el campanile, elle champane ogni cosa si ruppe abbacte tucti e poderi e ulivi e vino, e nulla non ci si ricolse. Iddio e San Martino ci aiuti.*" Libro Debitori e Creditori e Ricordi segnato di no. 3. dell' archivio del monastero di Maiano esistente nel R. Archivio di Stato in Firenze, c. 41. And Anon. (? Baroni), *La Parrochia di S. Martino a Maiano* (Firenze, Tip. del Vocabolario, 1875).



"AND ALL BEFORE US IS SPREAD OUT THE CITY OF FLOWERS . . ."

sixteenth century; and indeed neither they nor the old monastery, now a Fattoria close by, destroyed in the eighteenth century, will keep us long from the road. For at the corner, by the closed shrine, which holds a fresco in the manner of Ridolfo Ghirlandajo, we may look right across Val d'Arno to the hills of Chianti, to Torre del Gallo, that fantastic place, and the hill of San Miniato, which Gianozzo Manetti loved so well that he climbed it every Sunday morning; and all before us is spread the City of Flowers under the olives and the corn.

The great villa with the tower, so formidable a landmark in all the country between Settignano and Fiesole, belongs to Lord Westbury, the heir of Mr. Temple Leader. With its neighbour, *Il Palagio*, it was once in the possession of the Tolosini. Andrea Tolosini's widow in 1464 sold it, however, to the Alessandri, then the possessors of Vincigliata. It seems, however, that on 24th August, 1481, it was destroyed in a storm, and Benedetto di Bartolommeo Alessandri, who rebuilt it, was, not long after, obliged to cede it to his relative Guido Sforza, Count of Santa Fiora[1] in Mont' Amiata. Count Guido's son Federigo sold it in 1510 to Buonagrazzia, and from him it passed in 1546 to Alfonso di Luigi de' Pazzi, and there is a very strong tradition that S. Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi[2] lived here for some time. But in 1679 that branch of the Pazzi was extinct and the villa passed to the Grifoni, who, in 1710, sold it to the Tolomei Beffi, who held it till 1830, when it passed into the hands of Mr. Temple Leader.

[1] For all concerning the Counts Sforza of Santa Fiora, see *In Unknown Tuscany*, by Edward Hutton, with notes by William Heywood. (Methuen, 1909.)

[2] For all that concerns S. Maria Madd. de' Pazzi, see *Vite de' Santi e Beati Fiorentini*, by G. M. Brocchi (Firenze, 1751), and my *Florence and Northern Tuscany* (Methuen, 1907), p. 257, etc.

Returning to the shrine, where four roads meet, we take that directly to the right out of Via delle Cave by which we came, and following it upwards for some fifty yards take the first way downwards to the left, Via d'Affrico they call it, for it leads across that now imprisoned stream.

It will be remembered that at the close of the second day of the *Decamerone* Madonna Filomena took the laurel crown from her head and crowned Neifile Queen, and it was she who then proposed that they should change their residence.

"To-morrow, as you know," said she, "is Friday and the next day is Saturday, and both are days which are apt to be tedious to most of us on account of the kind of food we take on them; and then Friday was the day on which He Who died that we might live suffered His Passion, and it is therefore worthy of reverence, and ought, as I think, to be spent rather in prayer than in telling tales. And on Saturday it is the custom for women to wash the powder out of their hair and make themselves generally sweet and neat; also they use to fast out of reverence for the Virgin Mother of God and in honour of the coming rest from any and every work. Therefore, since we cannot, on that day either, carry out our established order of life, I think it would be well to refrain from reciting tales also. And as by then we shall have been here already four days, I think we might seek a new place if we would avoid visitors: and indeed I have already a spot in my mind." And it happened as she said, for they all praised her words and looked forward longingly to Sunday. On that very day the sun was already high when "with slow steps, the Queen with her friends and the three gentlemen, led by the songs of some twenty nightingales, took her way westward by an unfrequented lane full of green herbs and flowers just

opening after the dawn. So gossiping and playing and laughing with her company, she led them . . . to a beautiful and splendid Palace before half of the third hour was gone."

It is by the "unfrequented lane" that we too shall pass to Villa Palmieri. For it winds between the vineyards over the meadows downward to Affrico, then crossing the stream mounts through the olives towards San Domenico. It might seem hard to find so vague a way, but indeed it is only hard to miss it, for whichever path you take, and there are indeed two by which you can pass, you will cross the valley of Affrico and come at last to the Church of S. Domenico under Fiesole. Of these two ways that is perhaps the pleasanter which follows the Via d'Affrico to the little river past Villa Ciliegio and Villa Palmerino. By that way, however, you seem to leave the way of the *Decamerone*, and certainly the Valle delle Donne, far above you under the Doccia. If you will not forego these and are not mindful of a scramble, where the Via d'Affrico divides, some hundred yards after it leaves the highway, take the path to the right and follow it across the valley, climbing up to a country road, Via della Fontanella at last, to win to San Domenico. By this way you pass close to that valley which Landor loved so well.

> Where the hewn rocks of Fiesole impend
> O'er Doccia's dell and fig and olive blend,
> There the twin streams of Affrico unite,
> One dimly seen, the other out of sight;
> But ever playing in his smoothen'd bed
> Of polisht stone, and willing to be led
> Where clustering vines protect him from the sun.
> Here by the lake, Boccaccio's fair brigade
> Beguiled the hours and tale for tale repaid.

It is true Boccaccio does not say so, but then Landor says he met him in the Elysian Fields, and truly he may

have told him privately. What Boccaccio said about the place when he was yet living, however, may be found at the end of the tenth novel of the sixth day, which had the honour of being formally censured by the Council of Trent.[1] It was a summer afternoon. Dineo had just been crowned King by Madonna Elisa; the tales had been short that day and the sun was yet high, so that Madonna, seeing the gentlemen were set down to play (and such is the custom of men), called her friends to her and said:—

"'Ever since we have been here I have wished to show you a place not far off where I believe none of you have ever been: it is called La Valle delle Donne, and till to-day I have not had a chance to speak of it. It is yet early, if you choose to come with me I promise you that you will be pleased with your walk.' And they answered they were all willing: so without saying a word to the gentlemen, they called one of their women to attend them, and after a walk of nearly a mile they came to the place which they entered by a strait path where there burst forth a fair crystal stream, and they found it so beautiful and so pleasant, especially in those hot still hours of afternoon, that nothing could excel it: and as some of them told me later, the little plain in the valley was an exact circle, as though it had been described by a pair of compasses, though it was indeed rather the work of Nature than of Man. It was about half a mile in circumference surrounded by six hills of moderate height, on each of which was a palace built in the form of a little castle. . . . And then what gave them the greatest delight was the

[1] "Had the honour . . ." The Council of Trent, says Lord Acton, "impressed on the Church the stamp of an intolerant age, and perpetuated by its decrees the spirit of an austere immorality".

rivulet that came through a valley which divided two hills and running through the rocks fell suddenly and sweetly in a waterfall seeming, as it was dashed and sprinkled in drops all about, like so much quicksilver. Coming into the little plain beneath this fall, the stream was received in a fine canal, and running swiftly to the midst of the plain formed itself in a pool not deeper than a man's breast and so clear that you might see the gravelly bottom and the pebbles intermixed, which indeed you might count: and there were fishes there also swimming up and down in great plenty; and the water that overflowed was received into another little canal which carried it out of the valley. There the ladies all came together, and after praising the place, seeing the basin before them, that it was very private, they agreed to bathe. Bidding the maid to keep watch and to let them know if anyone came nigh by, they stripped off their clothes and went in, and it covered the beauty of their bodies as a crystal glass conceals a rose. After they had diverted themselves there for some time they dressed themselves again and returned, softly talking all the way of the beauty of the place."

To-day as we come upon the Valle delle Donne we miss that crystal pool, which already in the sixteenth century had vanished away, and instead we find a garden there as though those ladies had indeed become the roses of which Boccaccio dreamed.

The little stream of which Giovanni speaks, not only in the *Decamerone*, is Affrico, and whether you pass by Via d'Affrico or by the path through fields you must cross it on the way to S. Domenico. At S. Domenico in the days of the *Decamerone* there was no convent, for that was built by Barnaba degli Agli in the fifteenth century, so that it was altogether by the by-ways that Madonna Elisa led her friends home to

Schifanoja. We, less fortunate by far, must pass between *poderi* walls, taking the road on the right southward back to Florence from the little village which has grown up round San Domenico: by this way we shall pass as close as may be to Villa Palmieri and enter Florence at last by the Barriera della Cure, where we may take the tramway to the Duomo.

Villa Palmieri can never utterly be forgotten, since it lives for ever in the beautiful, untranslatable description Boccaccio has left us of it in the beginning of the third day of the *Decamerone*.

"Then the Queen" [it was Madonna Elisa] "led them to a most beautiful and sumptuous palace situated somewhat above the plain on a small hill. When they had entered and inspected everything, and seen that the halls and rooms had been cleaned and decorated, and plentifully supplied with all that was needed for sweet living, they praised its beauty and good order, and admired the owner's magnificence. And on descending, even more delighted were they with the pleasant and spacious courts, the cellars filled with choice wines, and the beautifully fresh water which was everywhere round about. Then they went into the garden, which was on one side of the palace, and was surrounded by a wall, and the beauty and magnificence of it at first sight made them eager to examine it more closely. It was crossed in all directions by long, broad and straight walks, over which the vines, which that year made a great show of giving many grapes, hung gracefully in arched festoons, and being then in full blossom, filled the whole garden with their sweet smell, and this, mingled with the odours of the other flowers, made so sweet a perfume that they seemed to be in the spicy gardens of the East. The sides of the walks were almost closed with red and white roses and with jessamine, so that they

gave sweet odours and shade not only in the morning, but when the sun was high, and one might walk there all day without fear. What flowers there were there, how various and how ordered, it would take too long to tell, but there was not one which in our climate is to be praised, that was not found there abundantly. Perhaps the most delightful thing therein was a meadow in the midst, of the finest grass and all so green that it seemed almost black, all sprinkled with a thousand various flowers, shut in by oranges and cedars, the which bore the ripe fruit and the young fruit too and the blossom, offering a shade most grateful to the eyes and also a delicious perfume. In the midst of this meadow there was a fountain of the whitest marble marvellously carved, and within—I do not know whether artificially or from a natural spring—threw so much water and so high towards the sky through a statue which stood there on a pedestal, that it would not have needed more to turn a mill. The water fell back again with a delicious sound into the clear waters of the basin, and the surplus was carried off through a subterranean way into little water-channels most beautifully and artfully made about the meadow, and afterwards it ran into others round about, and so watered every part of the garden, and collected at length in one place, whence it had entered the beautiful garden, it turned two mills, much to the profit, as you may suppose, of the *signore*, pouring down at last in a stream clear and sweet into the valley."

If this should seem a mere pleasaunce of delight, the vision of a poet, the garden of a dream, we have only to remember how realistically and simply Boccaccio has described for us that plague-stricken city, scarcely more than a mile away, to be assured of its truthfulness. And then Villa Palmieri is nearly as

beautiful to-day as it was so long ago; only while the gardens with their pergolas of vines, their hedges of jasmine and crimson roses, their carved marble fountains remain, the two mills he speaks of are gone, having been destroyed in a flood of the Mugnone in 1409, less than fifty years after he wrote of them. "Two years later," the writer who has made these Florentine villas her own, and who is so happy in the possession of the queen of them all, tells us, "they were rebuilt and a third mill nearer the town was erected after the siege of Florence in 1529, and bestowed upon the Foundling Hospital as compensation for damage done to its farms." Indeed, the arms of the Ospedale are still to be seen on the wall there.

But Villa Palmieri, or Schifanoja as it was then called, for within its gardens no care could live, belonged about Boccaccio's time to the Fini family. It was Cioni de' Fini who sold it to the Tolomei and they called it Palazzo de' Tre Visi, as it is said from a bas-relief of the Blessed Trinity which stood there. In 1454, however, it passed to Matteo Palmieri, who enlarged it, though it was not he, but his descendant, Palmiero Palmieri, who built the place we see now and called it by his own name in 1670. It was he too who built the great arched terrace over the old road to Fiesole which divided the villa from the gardens, and there on that ancient way in a little house under the archway the Misericordia of Florence used to meet their Brothers of Fiesole. Then in 1874 the Earl of Crawford bought Villa Palmieri, and to him is owing the new road up the hill of Schifanoja to San Domenico: then he closed the old way, and now the brothers of the Misericordia meet in a little garden plot by the new gate.

Vasari tells us that Sandro Botticelli painted an

Assumption of our Lady for the altar of the Palmieri chapel in S. Pier Maggiore, with an infinite number of figures, the zones of the heavens, the patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles, the evangelists, the martyrs, the confessors, the doctors, the virgins and the hierarchies; all after the design given him by Matteo who was a man of letters and learning :[1] and he executed the work after a masterly fashion and with extreme diligence. He portrayed Matteo and his wife kneeling at the foot of the picture. The picture seems to have aroused the suspicions of the Inquisition on account of its supposed heresy, so that the Palmieri carried it away from San Pier Maggiore to their villa here under San Domenico, where it was walled up till the beginning of the nineteenth century, when it was sold. Some time later the Duke of Hamilton bought it and in 1882 it passed to the National Gallery. And as it seems, Vasari was wrong. It is not the work of Sandro at all, but of Botticini, and as for its heresy there seems indeed but little room for it in that heaven filled with the soldiers of the Catholic Church.

So we pass on our way, leaving that beautiful villa behind us, perhaps in the twilight, the twilight that as we come into Florence is full of the gold and silver lights of the streets in which, after the labour of the day, the whole city seems to be gathered and where amid those innumerable voices something fades from our remembrance :—is it the voice of Boccaccio that in

[1] Matteo Palmieri was born in 1405. He studied under Carlo Marsuppini and pronounced his funeral oration in S. Croce in 1453. He is the author of *Della Vita Civile* and other Latin works. His *Città di Vita*, however, which was never published, strangely enough got him most fame. It is in *terza rima* and full of the Platonic philosophy of the time. See also Vespasiano Bisticci, *Vite di Uomini Illustri* (Firenze, 1859).

the fields and the vineyards seemed so friendly and so fitting, but which here in the modernity of Florence has no place any more amid the calling of the newsboys and whirr of the electric tram that—ah, surely—will bear us home?

II

FROM SETTIGNANO TO BAGAZZANO, TERENZANO AND ROVEZZANO BY THE BY-WAYS

IT is but half an hour in the tram from the Piazza del Duomo to Settignano. The little village is set on the lower slopes of the hills about three miles from Florence, and there, as it is said, though others claim the honour for Corbignano, Desiderio da Settignano, the famous sculptor, was born, and Michelangelo spent his childhood. Founded, as the Settignanesi like to believe, by the Emperor Septimius Severus, who named the place after himself, Settignano is to-day just a village, not too far from the city, nor too near the gate, where indeed you may have all the joys of the country, that courtesy for instance of which Leon Alberti speaks, without foregoing the pleasures of the town, such as they be in Florence, a little languid certainly, as though in the corridor of a beautiful museum a crowd of people, at heart somewhat impatient of their surroundings, had decided to pass their time, or to make holiday.

But here in Settignano, where of an evening the girls still walk arm in arm to and fro in the narrow climbing street, while the young men lounge in groups in the doorways, watching them slyly, curiously, almost carefully, as they pass, the dissonance, the incongruity of the city where the tram, rushing with the beating of a

huge bell among the statues, or under the porch of a church, or dangerously among the children playing in the narrow ways, is not to be found, here at least Leon Alberti's words still come home to us. "The country is gracious, trustworthy, true. If you give yourself to it patiently and lovingly, it never seems to be satisfied with what it does for you, but continually adds reward to reward. In spring . . . it will give you continual delight, green leaves and flowers, sweet smells and the songs of birds; so in every way making you gay and joyful, since everything smiles upon you, and promises a good harvest, filling you with all sorts of hopes, delight, pleasure. . . ."

And after all is not our chief delight in these country walks in the country itself, the flowers by the wayside, the wind among the flowers? Those works of art, pictures, statues, churches, after all are but secondary delights where Nature is so fair, so marvellous an artist in the service of man. That line of hills across the city towards the Carrara hills, how beautiful it is, how passionate, how different too from anything we may find in England, where truly the world is richer but yet seems to lack some profound meaning that these Tuscan hills, with their noble and gracious gesture, certainly express, so that often at dawn or at evening looking upon them some secret joy or sorrow seems suddenly born again in our hearts, some new emotion we had not felt before. And ever after, when we look on even the most splendid landscapes in England, the north coast of Cornwall, for instance, that thrusts back the sea, or the immense and profound wilderness of Dartmoor, something seems to have been lost to us and those passionate landscapes seem perhaps a little over-expressive, a little melodramatic as we say, as though in their eagerness they had tried to express more than there was to say, and lacking a certain reticence,

had become, as it were, insincere, their tragic beauty a little out of place, where everything has been established from the beginning, and all is yet so prosperous and so well.

It is upon one of those holy places so common and still so lovely in Tuscany that you come, when leaving the tram at Settignano, you find yourself in the Piazza there, before the little Church of S. Maria. Although a church has existed here certainly since the twelfth century, little or nothing seems to be known of its history, save that in the fourteenth century it was under the patronage of the Baroncelli, those *Signori* of Poggio Gherardo, while in 1518 it became a *Prioria*, and was restored and rebuilt in the style we now see in 1595, the baptistery having been added in 1620.

There is but little that is rare or beautiful in the church; only over the second altar in the south aisle one of the pupils of Andrea della Robbia has carved a Madonna and angels, five statues glazed in white, set against a modern painted background, while in the oratory close by, over the doorway within, is a bas-relief of the Madonna and Child attributed to Desiderio da Settignano. Humble though these works be, we should not care to pass them by; and then, at the canonica here, you will find the sacristan, who will lead you through the olive gardens to another oratory, Oratorio del Vannella they call it, above Corbignano on the way to the hills.

Following the road that leads out of a corner of the Piazza, behind the tramway, downhill into Piazza di Desiderio, you turn suddenly into a lane on the right between the houses, and presently come upon a brown convent of *Olivetani* monks, on the hillside among the olive gardens, a modern building of our own day. Passing behind this, almost at once you

begin to descend by a path somewhat rough and perilous that leads down to a little stream, a tributary of Mensola, and crossing it, you mount the opposite hill, almost as abruptly as you have descended, and there at the top beside a country road above Corbignano stands the little oratory, where Mass is said only once in the year.

The Oratorio del Vannella was, in its origin, just a wayside shrine, and it would have, indeed, no interest for us at all to-day, but that over the altar there Sandro Botticelli has painted his first fresco, Madonna Mary, with her little Son in her arms.

It is certainly no common beauty we have come to see all the way through the olive gardens, out of the spring sunshine into this deserted chapel by the roadside, but one of the rarest things in Tuscany, the first work of a great master still in its place where he set it over the altar of a country church. The only painter among his contemporaries of whom Leonardo has thought worthy to speak, Botticelli, in a generation of naturalists, comes to remind us of all the passing beauty of the world, its spiritual beauty and pathos. He is a visionary painter for whom nothing really exists that is not the creation of his own subtle and wayward spirit. In his work in the museums now so famous, a certain weariness, a divine sadness, seems to have fallen even on the goddess of joy, and for him certainly Madonna is become half reluctantly the Mother of God. How languidly even here in his first picture she holds between her hands "The Desire of all Nations," almost as it were in spite of herself, and certainly without joy. And yet He whom the Magi have perhaps just worshipped, does not turn away from her, or indifferently receive her love with ours, but desires her, yes, even as we do, stretching out His hands. Why is she so sorrowful? She is like a lily

ORATORIO DEL VANNELLA

beside a dry stream swooning in the sun, she is like a rose in the desert that is already languid at dawn; in her lap lies the King of kings, yet she is afraid. Her exaltation has passed from her, her lips can no longer form the word Magnificat, in the silence after the song the reaction has come, she has remembered only her intolerable honour; already the endless jewels of the rosary glitter about her feet, the Crown of crowns is too heavy for the head that has bent even under the weight of the lilies of the Annunciation, the marvellous vocatives of the Salve Regina have bewildered her: she but a girl still, turns to play with her little son and lo, not he, but God Himself lies in her arms.

It is strange to find here in the earliest work of Botticelli the dream that was to dominate his life, already precisely understood and completely expressed. Only the head of Mary, maybe, comes to us untouched from his hand, but it is enough; in this his earliest picture we see the intention of all his work, and understand both it and his tragedy.

One might go far along any country road before one found again so fair a thing as this, and yet in some subtle way every line of the hills in this country about Florence, every valley full of delicate shadow or sunshine, might seem to have gathered a new subtlety and sweetness from his work, that at last we have come to see because of him. Without the sheer blessedness of Umbria, the soft sweet light on the hills there, the immense vistas of her long and silent valleys, the country about Florence has a charm perhaps more subtle and more living, capable too of a keener and a more human joy. It is just this strange keen beauty, as it seems to me, that you find expressed in all Botticelli's work in those sensitive and wayward lines, so expressive and so passionate too, which are never over-

emphasised or allowed to degenerate into mannerism or self-consciousness, that, if we live there long enough, we shall see have so much in common with the hills, their pathos, their delicate appealing beauty. Something of this we may hope to discover as we pass along these country roads from shrine to shrine, from village to village, between the valleys and the hills. And indeed to the seeing eye, nothing could be more delicate and lovely than the view towards Settignano behind the group of cypresses at the door of this little wayside chapel Oratorio del Vannella. Standing there a moment before I went on my way, still with that vision of Madonna hidden in my heart, I seemed to begin to understand or to feel the strangeness of the beauty of these hills, within which Florence lies like a rose in the valley beside Arno.

But our way lies eastward away from the city, we follow the road to the hills, where it leads round the valley through the olive gardens till, where a steep cypress avenue climbs to the left and the road itself winds to the right past the little cemetery of Settignano, we keep straight on between the houses, crossing a little stream, and presently climbing the hillside among the vines. Fossataccio they call the place, and there in an old villa beside the road, called now Casa Romanelli, as it is said Desiderio da Settignano was born in 1428, and indeed a stone in his honour still marks the place.

But it is not, perhaps, of him we shall think as we follow the stony way through the vineyards on the hillside, but of the beauty and wonder of the country that at every step is more exquisitely spread out before us. To the west Vincigliata rises out of the cypress woods, to the south lies Arno, about to be lost in the City of Flowers, while, on the hills below us, Settignano stands like a country girl among the olives in the sun. Then after passing on the right a long peasant's house,

MADONNA AND CHILD

From the fresco by Botticelli in the Oratorio del Vannella at Corbignano

we too turn that way, coming not long after into the main road from Settignano that passes Castel di Poggio on the way to Mugello. Following it upwards as it turns almost on itself, at the top at the first break we turn to the right, and immediately when we can to the right again, following a by-way under the side of a wood on our left. If you should be in doubt, though indeed you should not be, ask for the road to Bagazzano, but should there be no one about, you may know you are right by the great cross which you pass on your right about two hundred yards after you have left the highway, where the fields become pure again, and a little hill rises between you and Arno.

Climbing this hill for a moment, Poggio Ghiandelli is its name, all the world of the Fiorentino seems spread out before you. Far away northward and west on a clear evening after rain, you may see the fantastic beautiful hills of Carrara, their white peaks like a vision almost transparent, or purple or rose-coloured in a sunset that has overwhelmed the earth in its fleeting glory. To the south lie the far hills about Siena, over Val d'Ema and Chianti, and maybe you may spy Volterra, and perhaps, but this I have never seen, the horn of Mont' Amiata on the verge of the Patrimony. Westward Arno winds across the plain to Signa like a riband of silver and gold, and there Prato lies like a rose by the wayside, and Pistoja at the foot of the mountains. But it is not any splendour such as these that will hold you long, while you may look eastward up Val d'Arno, on the weir that breaks, green and white, under Compiobbi among the cypresses, and when you lift up your eyes you may see the hills. They are not the hills of Tuscany, though Vallombrosa lies there high on their flanks and Arno flows beneath them, but they seem like Umbrian hills, stained with blue or sepia or purple, as the sun shines, or the day, as they tell you here, is

white, or the dawn grows into morning, or evening falls. Like vast precious stones they lie on the confines of my dreams, and truly as they seem to say, Umbria is there, that dreamland full of opening valleys, where at every turn of the way there is a little lonely hill, and on every hill a little city, and in every city some marvel; here—who knows—waits some golden-haired Princess, ah, to vanish away; there in some ruined cloister loiters a little saint, and in the valley at evening God Himself must surely walk in the Twilight.

Sometimes at evening, weary of Tuscany, I have watched these hills from this very place, lying among the corn listening to the voices of the reapers till night has hidden them in her shadow; but most often I have watched them in the early morning before the *cicale* begin to sing, when the labour of the day is yet to come, so that their nobility and beauty might stay with me all day long, and they might be my barrier, as it were, against all insidious and material things. And having once seen them, here in Florence I continually sought them out when I was tired or sorry, because they are full of promises, because . . .

Well, it is this landscape that lies before you—ah, if you can see it—in the way we shall go. For returning to the path we follow it over the brow of the hill and across the fields that are almost like downs here above the woods, to a great clump of trees that partly hides a ruined house on the hill before us; and that is Bagazzano, which of old was a hunting-lodge of the Medici. The name belongs truly to the hill, Poggio Bagazzano, on which the villa stands rather than to the villa itself, for long before the Medici came to any eminence, there was a castle here belonging to the Alberti Ristori, which was destroyed by the Medici after Montaperto. The place seems indeed to have

come to the Medici only in the sixteenth century, when the beautiful but ruined buildings we see were built.

To the right, not far away rises another hill, Poggio della Selva, with a villa or palace rather, that was once in the possession of the nuns of S. Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi. You may see the palace if you return some four hundred yards on your way, and take the road to the left. By this way, too, you may reach the village of Terenzano, as you may from Bagazzano itself, by a path through the vineyards, which finds the road between Settignano and Compiobbi about a quarter of a mile west of the village. Having won to it turn to the right towards Florence, and where the road first divides, take the way to the right and follow it till you come into Terenzano.

At Terenzano the sculptor Simone Mosca was born in 1492. He was a not very famous pupil of Andrea Sansovino, and carved among other things the Adoration of the Kings in the Chapel of Madonna in the Duomo of Orvieto, dying there in 1553. But it is not for his sake we are come to Terenzano, but because of the Church of S. Martino there, which still keeps about it much of its ancient beauty in the frescoes beside the altar, for instance, the work of the pupils of Taddeo Gaddi, where you may see Madonna and our Lord with S. Lorenzo, and S. Jacopo, and again S. Maria Maddalena between S. John Baptist and S. Martino; or in the *ancona*, a little spoiled, where you may see Madonna with her Son, and about her S. Martino, S. Lorenzo, S. Gregorio Magno, and S. Genoveffa, while under is this inscription: *Questa tavola a fatto fare Domenico dell' Aveduto per rimedio dell' anima sua e de' suoi discendenti. Anno Domini* MCCCCII *del mese di giugno al tempo di Ser Piero . . . Lorenzo pinsit.*

And indeed Lorenzo di Niccolò, the son of Niccolò di Pietro Gerini, was the painter. You may see his work, lovely enough to be better known, at Cortona, where in S. Domenico he has painted the Coronation of the Virgin.

From Terenzano you follow the road as it winds about the hillside back towards Florence to the Crocifisso in Alto, where suddenly at a turning of the way you come once more in sight of the city, and there built in the rock is a little shrine with a spoiled fresco of the fourteenth century still visible over the altar.

It is directly in front of this shrine at the top of the hill that a way paved with stones leads steeply down the hillside on the left towards Arno. Following it down past the peasant's house, you take the first turning to the right, and then the first to the left, not forgetting in your anxiety to find the road to see the glimpses the way gives you of Arno over the vines between the olives. Then where four ways meet, keep straight on, turning neither to right nor to left. At last—and the way is beautiful and made for lingering—you come to a road, and in a moment find yourself in the courtyard of the famous villa Mont' Albano. Turning to the right along a winding road, you come out before the place, perhaps a little over-restored, but once lovely enough, for Michelangelo held it for one of the most beautiful castles that he had seen. Long and long before that, the Tedalda held it, and it seems to have remained in that family originally from Fiesole till, in 1538, Bartolo Tedalda left half of it to the Church of S. Andrea at Rovezzano. This division seems at last to have caused the ruin of the place, which was reduced in the eighteenth century to a very modest villa almost lost among ruins. Then in our own time Commen-

datore Bolla came into possession of it, and restored it as we now see. Of old it must have dominated the Via Aretina Nuova to which we now descend, passing on the way another famous place, Loretino, which belonged apparently to a branch of the Tedalda family called Tedaldini, Ghibellines all of them and of considerable power in Florence where they possessed palaces and towers. But early in the fifteenth century Loretino came into the hands of the Pandolfini. Can it have been of this villa old Agnolo Pandolfini was thinking when, talking to his sons and teaching them his somewhat narrow, yet wholesome and delightful wisdom, he reminded himself of those villas near Florence, some like palaces almost—some like castles, "in the purest air in a laughing country of sweet and lovely views, where are no fogs, nor bitter winds, but always fresh water and everything is healthy and pure"?

It is but a step from Loretino still by the winding road, that now passes over the railway, into Via Aretina, where you turn to the right following the highway into Rovezzano. And here indeed we are come out on a Roman road. The Via Aretina, or to give it its true name, *Via Regia Romana Postale per Arezzo*, is in a great part but a rebuilding or retracing of the ancient Via Cassia, which from the times of the Emperor Hadrian, if not before, led out of Porta del Popolo across Ponte Molle to Florence, only it used to pass over the hill of S. Donato in Collina on the other side Arno, and entered the city by Porta S. Niccolò. Later, however, when it was safe, the first two posts of the road out of Florence were changed, so that the road ran, not by the short difficult way over the hills, but through Val d'Arno out of Porta alla Croce, the first post being at Pontassieve where it met the Forlì road, the second at Incisa, where it

crossed the river. By that way it was nine posts and a half to Lago Trasimeno within the confines of Umbria. A most interesting and delightful book might well be written on the old roads of Italy, and indeed one can imagine few subjects more interesting. An infinite leisure still possesses them, there is not one among them all that is not still beautiful, leading to splendid and famous things. Via Francigena, Via Æmilia, Via Flaminia, Via Appia, Via Cassia, how those names appeal to us if we care even a little for the spiritual fatherland of us all. Too many of us cling helplessly to the railway, but now that the *automobile* is to be found in every village, the roads will get back their own, and I who have tramped them all in the rain and the sun, cannot but smile when I think of that new Italy, Italy herself, waiting there by the wayside for the traveller who has till now seen only the mongrel cities.

But by this we should be in Rovezzano, on the outskirts at least, and it is there on your right as you enter the village, you come upon a great shrine by the way, built and painted in 1408, where Madonna with her Son in her lap waits among the saints to bless you on the road to Rome. It is a work of that same Niccolò di Pier Gerini whose son painted the Ancona in S. Martino at Terenzano, just a flower by a somewhat dusty wayside; but where else in the world to-day will you find flowers at all? Not far away in a little Piazzetta on the other side of the way another shrine stands, where some pupil of Andrea del Sarto has painted Madonna, while our Lord is playing with S. Giovannino; like any mother to-day in these country places sitting at her door watching her little son.

And then just here among the houses the Church of S. Andrea stands, a humble place enough, and more than a little spoiled they tell you by the earthquake,

spoiled certainly for us to this extent, that the people on this account have covered up the thirteenth century picture of Madonna over one altar there so that you may not see it. Little or nothing remains in the church of any interest at all, but in the sacristy there is a very beautiful blue and white terra-cotta in the manner of Luca della Robbia, Madonna holding her Divine Son in her lap while He plucks a lily just within His reach. And then upstairs in the priest's house there is a stucco bust of S. Giovannino, one of those rare coloured heads of the fifteenth century, such as Antonio or Benedetto da Rovezzano may well have made for love, or for the honour of his birthplace.

Not far away along the road to Florence, is the Church of S. Michele Arcangiolo, with a beautiful doorway of the sixteenth century that the Bartolini-Salimbeni, Carocci tells us, caused to be built; while within is another thirteenth century picture of Madonna, and over the door of the Canonica a little statue of della Robbia ware, S. Michael himself, who seems to stand on guard.

Just here you may, if you will, find the tram for Piazza del Duomo, or turning up the Via Capponcina just beyond S. Michele return to Settignano, passing under the villa of Signor Gabriele d'Annunzio, La Capponcina, past the door of the beautiful villa of La Duse, La Porziuncola, and so to S. Maria a Settignano, and the tramway back to the city.

III

TO FIESOLE, CASTEL DI POGGIO, AND VINCIGLIATA

THERE are many ways to Fiesole: one goes out of the Barriera della Cure by Via Boccaccio, one by Via della Pazzola, and one again by S. Gervasio, and that is the way of the tram. And for our walk that is, maybe, the most convenient, though certainly less than the best (which leads you behind the gardens of Villa Palmieri to S. Domenico at the foot of the great hill), for to-day it will be well to go to S. Domenico betimes in the morning to spend at the least the hour before noon there, and then climbing up by the old way into Fiesole to take lunch on the terrace of the Albergo Aurora, whence the view is so famous and fine over Florence; and after, to see the city before setting out in the cool of the day, for the walk by Castel di Poggio through the woods to Vincigliata, and home again by Ponte a Mensola.

San Domenico, as its name implies, is a small village which has gathered round the Dominican convent of San Domenico, half-way up the hill of Fiesole. It was Jacopo Altoviti, Bishop of Fiesole, who began the convent, for in the beginning of the fifteenth century he gave a vineyard there to Frate Giovanni Domenichi, who in 1406 began to build the Dominican church and convent we see. Many disputes as to the property

Alinari

THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST

From the picture by Lorenzo di Credi in the Church of S. Domenico at Fiesole

followed, and money not being forthcoming, the work was about to be abandoned, when Barnaba degli Agli, who had already given some 600 florins to the *Frati* for their building, died, leaving enough money to them by will to finish both convent and church. So in spite of more disputes the church was finished and called S. Barnaba, and the Agli arms were set over the door; later, however, in order to carry out to the letter Barnaba's will, the church was dedicated under the name of S. Domenico, as he had wished. Here S. Antonino, later Archbishop of Florence, was received into the Dominican Order when he was sixteen years old, and certainly before the convent was finished, not without a severe test of his steadfastness it might seem, for Fra Giovanni made him learn the whole of Gratian's decree by heart before admitting him. Here too Beato Angelico, who was to be one of the greatest of all the Florentine painters, was received in 1408; and owing to those disputes which followed the death of Barnaba, he was early a traveller going with the brethren to Foligno, and later to Cortona, only returning to Fiesole in 1416 when the Friars had settled the disputes with the heirs of Barnaba degli Agli. Suppressed at last in the early part of the nineteenth century, the convent was spoiled of its frescoes, but in 1880 it was bought back by the Dominicans, so that to-day, happily, it is fulfilling its original purpose as a religious house. But it is not altogether a fifteenth century church we see to-day, as we enter it from the cloister where Cosimo de' Medici walked so often in the evening talking with the *Frati*. The centuries have done their best to honour and to spoil S. Domenico. And then there is almost nothing left of the work which Fra Angelico did here: a picture much repainted in the first chapel of the north aisle—a Madonna with our Lord surrounded by many crowds of saints, and a spoiled crucifix in the sacristy. Indeed

the only really lovely thing now in the church is a Baptism of Christ by Lorenzo di Credi: a beautiful serene picture where our Lord stands in Arno, not far from the city, which we may see in the distance under Monte Morello, while S. Giovanni, quietly in the dawn, pours the water on His forehead, and God blesses Him. Of old, Angelico's Coronation of the Virgin hung here, and Perugino's Baptism too, now in the Uffizi, but that was taken by Grand Duke Leopold who gave in exchange Lorenzo di Credi's picture, while the Coronation was stolen away by the French, and is now one of the greatest treasures of the Louvre.

It is down a lane between garden walls, a lane that leaves the Piazza nearly opposite the Church of S. Domenico, that you must pass to reach the Badia, once the great shrine of the Fiesolani, where S. Romolo the holy bishop lay in peace, till a few years ago his oratory beside the abbey—you may see the place as you pass down to the Piazza to-day—was stupidly destroyed.

The Badia itself, under the invocation of SS. Romolo and Bartolommeo, was founded in 1028 in the place where of old the Duomo of Fiesole stood, and according to a tradition, on the site of an old fortress near the place, marked to-day by a bridge over the Mugnone, where Stilicho, that hero, in 406 defeated the barbarian Radagaisus. At first a certain Azzone, a disciple of S. Romolo, was invited from Fonte Avellana to rule the abbey, but we soon find the Benedictines of Monte Cassino in command, and the place remained in their hands till in 1422 it passed to the Lateran Canons of the Most Holy Saviour under a brief of Eugenius IV., who in that year reinstated this most ancient Community of Canons Regular in Grottaferrata and the Lateran, whence they had been expelled in 1294 by Boniface

THE BADIA FIESOLANA

VIII. Under them the Badia Fiesolana increased in fame, and indeed became perhaps the most splendid religious house in Tuscany, especially by reason of the favour of Cosimo *Pater Patriae*, who, besides presenting the abbey with a fine library, employed Brunelleschi to build both a spacious cloister and a new church at a cost of some eighty thousand florins. In doing this, however, Brunelleschi did not destroy the little façade of marble, dating from the same time as that of S. Miniato al Monte. Cosimo was a frequent visitor at the Badia in those days, for his friend Padre Timoteo da Verona was one of the canons, as also later was Matteo Bosio of Verona who had the friendship of Lorenzo and Poliziano; while others of that famous company, Pico della Mirandola, being not the least among them, often dwelt there in the blessed silence. And then was it not there too was established the most famous of Academies, the Platonic Academy of Florence? Later Inghirami set up his printing press there, while in the church in 1452 Giovanni de' Medici was made cardinal, and in the convent Giuliano Duc de Nemours died in 1516.

The abbey, however, fell on evil days, and was suppressed in 1778, its priceless *codici* being taken to the Laurenziana, its books to the Magliabechiana, whilst, for itself, it became a villa for the use of the Archbishop of Florence.

To-day there is little enough to see, save the church itself, a great nave with a transept under a circular vaulting, and there the pupils of Desiderio da Settignano have worked, and Giovanni di S. Giovanni, that bizzare artist, has painted, while Brunelleschi is said to have designed the lectern in the sacristy.

Returning from this quiet and beautiful retreat to S. Domenico, we follow on foot, for it is impossible to

go in any other way, the old road to Fiesole, still between garden walls. And by this way we may tread in the footsteps of the Bishop of Fiesole, who leaving his coach at San Domenico would climb to Fiesole in a sledge drawn by oxen, resting at the Riposo de' Vescovi, passing the Tre Pulzelle, a famous inn which stood there at the corner of the way that still bears its name. The bishop too like ourselves would turn perhaps to look at the great view of Florence within the beautiful circle of her hills; but then he would continue on his way, while we, less eager perhaps, after passing under the arch that joins two villas (that on the right being Villa Papiniano, the home of Baccio Bandinelli whom Cellini hated), we turn to the right, coming in about two hundred yards to the little, forgotten Oratory of S. Ansano, where it is necessary to ring for admittance.

The Oratory of S. Ansano seems to have been founded in the tenth century, and though we know scarcely anything of its origin or its history, it is certainly not the least interesting of the churches of Fiesole. In the thirteenth century the Campagnia called della SS. Trinità, composed for the most part of Florentines, assembled there; and indeed the place seems to have been scarcely more than a wayside chapel, till in 1795 the Canonico Angiolo Maria Bandini bought it and turned it with a neighbouring house into a little museum of pictures and majolica—a museum in a chapel—which it remains to this day.

There are many beautiful things within, but the most worthy of our attention are certainly the four *Trionfi* by Jacopo di Sellajo.[1]

The four panels of Sellajo, who had Botticelli for master, illustrate four of the *Trionfi* of Petrarch. It is

[1] Mr. Berenson has identified these pictures, and very generously given me news of them.

Alinari

THE TRIUMPH OF LOVE

From the picture by Jacopo di Sellajo in the Church of S. Ansano, Fiesole

possible that once there were six of them, but these four are now all that remain to us of the work of the pupil of a man who we shall do well to remind ourselves here spent his old age in illustrating, as it were, the Divine Comedy.

The *Trionfi* were, as we scarcely need to be reminded, visions that came to the poet in Valclusa when, asleep one day, dreaming of Laura, suddenly he saw *Love Triumphant* on a car of fire driven by four horses, and surrounded by an innumerable crowd of mortals, some prisoners, some wounded, some already murdered. He recognised no one, but a shade called him by name and both revealed himself to him, and, to satisfy his desires, showed him among the rest Cæsar Augustus, Nero, Marcus Aurelius, Dionysius, Alexander, and so forth, together with many heroes and the gods of old. Then he found himself speaking with Massinissa and Sofonisba, and Seleuco spoke with him. Then he saw Perseus, Narcissus, Atalanta, Acis and Galatea, Carmenta and Pico, and such. And his friend showed him beside, Pompey, Cornelia, Aegistheus, Clytæmnestra, Piramus and Thisbe, and an innumerable crowd of men and women, Lancelot and Guinivere, Tristram and Isotta, and the undivided twain of Rimini. Then while he spoke with *una giovanetta,* he saw Orpheus with many other poets both ancient and modern, Greek, Latin and Italian, and among them his friends Tommaso da Messina, Socrate and Lelio. And Love led them *tutti incatenati* through the woods and mountains to that delicate isle and serene, that was once sacred to Venus.

In the *Triumph of Chastity* Petrarch describes the fierce battle fought betwixt Love and Madonna Laura, till at last she was victorious, and binding her adversary, came with Penelope, Virginia, Judith and the rest to

Rome, where she offered her spoil in the *Tempiodella Pudicizia*.

The *Triumph of Time* tells how the Sun, lusting for Fame, quickened his course in pursuit of it. While in the *Triumph of Christ*, the poet cries, "Look; in whom dost thou trust?" and answers, "In the Lord". And before his eyes the world passed away, and was born again more jocund and more beautiful by far, and he himself sees the Highest Good and finds hope again of being joined to Laura in Heaven.

In truth there might seem to be but little of all this in Sellajo's pictures. He has taken only what suited him, and the result, while not so astonishing and disturbing as those plates his master made for the Inferno, is yet full of a delicate loveliness, half real, half dream-like, that is in itself a vision. But who are those three bound figures on Love's car that crouch under the flying footsteps of Love Triumphant? Who is she who, so coldly almost, watches Love bound by her maidens on the road to Rome?

Other treasures too the church possesses, terra-cottas of the della Robbia, but not the work of Luca or of Giovanni: school work, then, but so fine that only the fifteenth century could have produced it; and to that fortunate age too must be given the Madonna attributed to Donatello, the picture said to be by Ghirlandajo.

Coming out of that little church again, into the sunshine and the world, we climb the steep and narrow way before the doorway uphill to the platform among the cypresses. How fair Florence seems from there, almost a fifteenth century city, and then—that villa just above us and behind—what can it be but Villa Medici? Up at Fiesole, so we have heard, Botticelli first saw Madonna Simonetta, in a garden of cypresses among the olives, while Lorenzo de' Medici spoke

with Pico della Mirandola of the Love of Plato, and wrote songs too, and Giuliano at his feet listened, looking the while over the city. Well, this is the very place.

Michelozzo built the villa for Giovanni, son of Cosimo de' Medici: "a magnificent and noble palace at Fiesole," Vasari calls it, adding that "the foundations of the lower part on the steep slope of the hill cost an enormous sum, but it was not thrown away, as there he made vaults, cellars, stables, places for the making of wine and oil, and other good and commodious habitations; and above them, beside the bed-chambers, drawing-rooms, and other apartments, he arranged rooms for books and for music. In short, Michelozzo showed there how valiant an architect he was, for it was so well built that although high up on that hill, no crack ever showed itself in the foundations." It was here that Sixtus IV. with his fellow-murderers hoped to kill both Lorenzo and Giuliano. "They thought their design might be effected when Lorenzo and Giuliano went to dine at the villa of the former at Fiesole," says Mecatti, "but this came to nought because Giuliano did not come; then they determined to do the deed in the Medici house, for they made sure that when the archbishop came to Florence to attend High Mass, Lorenzo, according to his custom, would invite him to dinner". It was, however, as we know, in the Duomo itself, that the attempt was made at last, with partial success, Giuliano falling beneath the dagger of the priest who communicated him.

The Villa Medici at Fiesole, however, has for us other memories than the blasphemy and murder of Pope Sixtus IV. Something of this remembrance may be caught perhaps from that letter which Poliziano, returned from Madonna Clarice at Cafaggiuolo, sent to Marsilio Ficino who was living at Careggi. "When

your retreat at Careggi grows too hot in the month of August, I am hoping you may think this our rustic dwelling at Fiesole not beneath your notice. We have plenty of water here, and but little sun, for we are in a valley, and are never without a cool breeze. The villa itself, lying away from the road, almost hidden in a wood, yet commands a view of the whole of Florence; and although the district is densely populated, I have perfect solitude such as is loved by those who leave the town. I have a double attraction to offer you, for Pico comes very often from his oak wood to see me, stealing in unexpectedly and dragging me out of my den to share his supper, which as you know is frugal, yet well served and sufficient, and seasoned with most pleasant talk and jests. But come to me, you shall not sup worse, and perchance you shall drink better, for the palm of good wine I am ready to contend even with Pico himself."[1]

And so, following the road to the right, you come into the great Piazza, littered with the booths of the straw-plaiters, in the keen air of Fiesole, among a rude and virile people, who look down on Florence all day long.

"Not more than two miles distant from Florence," says Varchi, the old historian, "shines Fiesole, once a city, now a fruitful hill; and yet she is a city still . . . because she always had, and still has her bishop. . . . Of a truth the position on this charming hill is so pleasant and delightful, that the fable about its having been built by Atlantas under a constellation which

[1] Poliziano, *Ep.*, lib. lx., ep. 14. For a fuller account of Villa Medici and for very many of the famous villas about Florence, see Janet Ross, *Florentine Villas* (Dent, 1904). It was in Villa Medici that, as Mrs. Ross reminds me, Poliziano wrote his famous (alas, no longer famous but forgotten) Latin poem *Rusticus*.

bestows peace of mind, repose of body, and piety of heart, seems to be true." And indeed whether Atlas with Electra his wife born in the fifth degree from Japhet, son of Noah, built the city upon this rock, by the counsel, as is said, of Apollinus, midway between the sea of Pisa and Rome and the Gulf of Venice, matters little: maybe these are but the tales of the old woman that Dante speaks of—

Dei Troiani, di Fiesole e di Roma.

Nevertheless the Fiesolani are not Florentines, people of the valley, but Etruscans, people of the hills, and that you may see in half an hour any day in their windy Piazzas and narrow, climbing ways. They have not the urbanity of the Florentine, who while he scorns you in his soul as a barbarian, will trade with you, eat with you, and humour you, certainly without betraying his contempt. But the Fiesolano is otherwise. He is quarrelsome and a little aloof, he will not concern himself overmuch about you, but will do his business whether you come or go. And I think truly he still hates the Florentine as the Pisan does, as the Sienese does, with an immortal, cold, everlasting hatred, that maybe nothing will altogether wipe out, or cause him to forget. All these people have suffered too much from Florence, who in her stupid cunning understood the art of victory as little as she understood the art of Empire.

From the earliest times, as it might seem, Florence, a Roman foundation after all, hated Fiesole which once certainly was an Etruscan city. Time after time she destroyed it, generally in self-defence. In 1010, for instance, Villani tells us: "The Florentines perceiving that their city of Florence had no power tc rise much while they had overhead so strong a fortress as the city of Fiesole, one night secretly and subtly

set an ambush of armed men in divers parts of Fiesole. The Fiesolani, feeling secure as to the Florentines, and not being on their guard against them, on the morning of their chief festival of S. Romolo, when the gates were open and the Fiesolani unarmed, the Florentines entered into the city under cover of coming to the *festa;* and when a good number were within, the other armed Florentines which were in ambush secured the gates; and on a signal made to Florence, as had been arranged, all the host and friends of the Florentines came on horse and on foot to the hill, and entered into the city of Fiesole, and traversed it, slaying scarce any man nor doing any harm, save to those who opposed them. And when the Fiesolani saw themselves to be suddenly and unexpectedly surprised by the Florentines, part of them which were able fled to the fortress, which was very strong, and long time maintained themselves there. The city at the foot of the fortress having been taken and overrun by the Florentines, and the strongholds and they which opposed themselves being likewise taken, the common people surrendered themselves on condition that they should not be slain nor robbed of their goods; the Florentines working their will to destroy the city, and keeping possession of the bishop's palace. Then the Florentines made a covenant, that whosoever desired to leave the city of Fiesole and come and dwell in Florence might come safe and sound with all his goods and possessions, or might go to any place which pleased him, for the which thing they came down in great numbers to dwell in Florence, whereof there were and are great families in Florence. And when this was done, and the city was without inhabitants and goods, the Florentines caused it to be pulled down and destroyed, all save the bishop's palace and certain other churches and the fortress, which still

ETRUSCAN WALLS, FIESOLE

held out, and did not surrender under the said conditions."

A hundred and fifteen years later we read again: "In the year of Christ 1125 the Florentines came with an army to the fortress of Fiesole, which was still standing and very strong, and it was held by certain gentlemen, *Cattani*, which had been of the city of Fiesole, and thither resorted highwaymen and refugees and evil men, which sometimes infested the roads and country of Florence; and the Florentines carried on the siege so long that for lack of victuals the fortress surrendered, albeit they would never have taken it by storm, and they caused it to be all cast down and destroyed to the foundations, and they made a decree that none should ever dare to build a fortress again at Fiesole".[1]

Now whether Villani is strictly right in his chronicle matters little or nothing. We know that Fiesole was an Etruscan city, that with the rise of Rome, like the rest, she became a Roman colony; all this too her ruins confirm. With the fall of Rome and the barbarian invasions, she was perfectly suited to the needs of the Teutonic invader. What hatred Florence had for her was probably due to the fact that she was a stronghold of the barbarian nobles; and the fact that in 1010, as Villani says, the Fiesolani were content to leave the city and descend to Florence, while the citadel held out and had to be dealt with later, goes to prove that the fight was rather between the Latin Commune of Florence and the pirate nobles of Fiesole, than between Florence and Fiesole itself. Certainly with the destruction of the alien power at Fiesole the city of Florence gained every immediate

[1] Villani, *Cronaca*, lib. iv., trans. by R. E. Selfe (Constable, 1906), pp. 71-73 and 93. The fortress stood where now rises the Church of S. Francesco.

security; the last great fortress in her neighbourhood was destroyed.

To-day Fiesole consists of a great piazza in which a campanile towers between two hills covered with houses and churches and a host of narrow lanes. In the Piazza stands the Duomo founded in 1010 by Bishop Jacopo Bavaro, who brought his throne readily enough up the hill from the ancient church on the site of the Badia, where of old it was established. The Campanile dates from 1213, and like the church it is built of squared stones without carving of any sort within or without. Restored though it is,[1] it keeps still something of its old severity and beauty, standing there like a fortress between the hills and between the valleys. It is of basilica form, with a nave and aisles flanked by sixteen columns of sandstone. As at S. Miniato the choir is raised over a lofty crypt. There is not perhaps to-day much of interest in the church, but over the west door you may see a statue of S. Romolo by Giovanni della Robbia himself, made in 1521, and brought here from the bishop's palace;[2] while in the choir, in the Salutati chapel there, is the masterpiece of Mino da Fiesole, the tomb of Bishop Leonardo Salutati, who died in 1465, and opposite is a marble reredos with Madonna between S. Romolo and S. Leonardo, by the same master. The beautiful bust on the tomb is an early work of Mino's, and the tomb itself, as I have said, is certainly among the most original and charming works of that master. If the reredos does not appear to be so fine, it is perhaps only that with so splendid a

[1] It was restored in 1863 as a national monument.

[2] It is inscribed "S C S ROMULUS EP FESULANUS; above one reads, TEMPORE RD EPI FESULANI GULIELMI DE FOLCHIS ANNO DOMINI MDXXI; above again is the *stemma*.

Alinari

THE TRIUMPH OF TIME

From the picture by Jacopo di Sellajo in the Church of S. Ansano, Fiesole

work before us we are content only with the best of all.

The retablo over the high altar is by Andrea Ferrucci. A flight of steps leads down to the crypt under the choir, which is supported by beautiful antique columns. Here is the tomb of S. Romolo.

As you come out of the Duomo on your right is the Canonica founded in 1032, and restored in 1439, with the addition of a portico, a charming piece of work of the fifteenth century. In the cloister you may find similar columns to those which to-day stand in the *Scavi*.

Opposite the cathedral is the Episcopal palace which Jacopo Bavaro built. This has been so often restored that little or nothing remains of the original building. In the very ancient oratory annexed to it, Oratorio di S. Jacopo Maggiore, is a picture of the Coronation of the Virgin, a beautiful work of the early fifteenth century, possibly by a pupil of Orcagna. Here in the Middle Age the bishop ruled as feudal signor, not only over Fiesole, but in many a village and territory round about. In 1228 Bishop Ildebrando got possession even of the Church of S. Maria in Campo in Florence, and built there a residence for himself and his successors.

All these buildings at Fiesole are for the most part composed of ancient stones and pillars found in the Roman town, but the great Seminario in Via S. Francesco close by is a building of the seventeenth century, the only thing of any interest there being the relief of Giovanni della Robbia over the high altar, a Madonna and saints carved in 1520, which like that in the Duomo comes from the Palazzo Vescovile.[1]

[1] It is inscribed GVILLELMVS DE FOLCHIS FESVL FIERI FECIT ANNO DOMINI MDXX.

On the eastern side of the Piazza is the ancient, but, alas, quite modernised church or rather oratorio of S. Maria Primerana. It was so called from an image of Madonna in the Byzantine style. The oratory was certainly in existence in the year 966 when Bishop Zanobi gave it and its belongings to the canons of the Duomo. In the fifteenth century the church both within and without seems to have been covered with frescoes. Later all these were covered with whitewash, and to-day only one is left to us lately uncovered, a Presentation in the Temple. The most beautiful work of art left to us here, however, is a Crucifixion by one of the della Robbia, a pupil of Andrea's perhaps, and though there are one or two interesting pictures in the church it is to this only we shall return. Wandering there we may remind ourselves that it was in this church, in homage as it were to the ancient lordship of the bishop in the city which we find expressed in a Bull of Pope Pasquale II. in 1103, that every new Potestà swore *davanti al Proposto* to observe Justice. While here too every year on the Monday in Easter week the canons chose among the *famiglie possidente* of Fiesole the new gonfaloniere who succeeded on the second Sunday in May.[1]

Close to S. Maria Primerana is the Palazzo Pretorio bearing the arms of the Potestà from 1520 to 1808. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century the municipal statutes dating from 1451 were kept here. Founded about 1300, but rebuilt in the fifteenth century, it is now a communal school, and a museum of Etruscan antiquities. Surely this is as strange a fate as that which has befallen the ancient theatre and the Roman baths and such, which are now really

[1] *Cf.* A. Guerri, *Fiesole e il suo Comune* (Firenze, Frangini), p. 56.

ROMAN BATHS AT FIESOLE

a pleasure garden covered with flowers. And indeed it is scarcely to see the excavations that one goes to that quiet place to-day, but rather for the beauty of the view far away over the Val di Mugnone to Pratolino and Monte Senario.

It is for the same reason I always climb the steep hill westward out of the Piazza up to S. Francesco, where of old the Rocca stood, though some pupil of Piero di Cosimo has painted there a rare and curious picture, a Conception of the Madonna. Nor is this the only wonder of the place, for over the high altar Filippino Lippi or one of his pupils has painted the Annunciation, while over the first altar on the south is a Marriage of S. Catherine, and over the second a Crucifixion painted on a gold ground with S. Francis at the foot of the Cross by Neri di Bicci. Opposite this, is a picture of Madonna and Child between S. Michael and S. Sebastian, of the school of Ghirlandajo, and over the last altar on the north side, beyond the door, The Adoration of the Kings in Val d'Arno.

Beneath the church a little oratory of S. Bernardino has just been laid bare; the humble little chapel is touching in its simplicity.

But after all, it is not chiefly to see churches that we have wandered up to Fiesole, for, in the country at any rate, be they never so fine and fair, they are much less than the olive gardens, while all the pictures are shamed by the flowers that run over the hills. And here from S. Francesco you may see all Tuscany spread out before you, from the Apennines to Mont' Amiata; you may watch the clouds on the mountains, the sun in the valleys, the shadows on the hills. Standing there by S. Alessandro, for instance, that spoiled church with its beautiful antique columns, at any hour of the day, you are caught by a certain meaning and passion in this landscape, so Latin, so

profoundly expressive beyond anything to be found in the north. The dawn comes up always with a certain tragedy over Monte Senario, and the day dies of its own beauty every night behind the hills of Carrara, that from here in their almost visionary beauty seem made of some precious and half-transparent stone—moonstone or amethyst—ah, I know not how to name it. And what in the world beside is half so fair, half so beautiful, as those Tuscan cypresses on the edge of that grove of olives?

Such thoughts certainly are not slow to come while you dream away a summer afternoon on the terrace of Albergo Aurora, with the Flower-town at your feet. But the road calls already, the splendour of the day is past, in the cool of the afternoon you set out, leaving the great Piazza del Duomo for the smaller Piazza di Mino da Fiesole, passing thence uphill through the straggling suburb of the city by Via Ferrucci, till at the top you come upon a great shrine where Ridolfo Ghirlandajo or his pupils have painted very sweetly Madonna of the wayside, with Bambino Gesù on her knee. Just beyond you come again among the olive gardens, and looking over their tossing silver see the great valley of the Mugnone below you, and far away at the head of it Monte Senario towering into the sky, Monte Senario where *I Servi di Maria*, that order originally founded by seven Florentines of the Laudesi, finding the little house they had built where now S. Croce stands, too near the city, set out over the hills, founding this convent on Monte Senario. Sometimes when the *tramontana* blows, even from so far away at sunset, you may hear those bells, marvellously sweet in the evening over the valley. Then as you pass on your way round Monte Ceceri thinking of this, or the beautiful gesture of the hills beyond Pratolino, suddenly an immense

view to the southward opens before you, stretching far and far away over the Chianti to the hills of Siena; and once on a fortunate day I seemed to see Mont' Amiata there on the verge of the Patrimony, and often Volterra, that high, fierce place, the only really Etruscan stronghold left in the world, where it might seem they speak still as it were their own language, and whence the gods have not altogether fled away. In the foreground among the cypresses, on its solitary hill stands Castel di Poggio for which we are making, and far away below almost lost in the trees, the Castle of Vincigliata by which we must pass. Perhaps you will rest here a little in this high place between the valleys, that you may never forget so fair a view. Both north and south the hill falls away from you covered with cypresses, and there you spy smiling among the trees, a quiet villa, here a village, there a little town. In the vineyard some one is singing as he sprinkles the grapes, the olives seem to be listening to the whispering of the corn, and yet there is so great a silence that you may hear the quiet eternal voices of the earth.

Then when you come to a turning out of the way on the right, you follow Via Giovanni Leader through the woods, and ever as you go Castel di Poggio towers above you over the valley, till suddenly you come upon it, a beautiful fragment of a ruined fortress, looking from its hill-top into the valley of Florence, into the valley of Ontignano, guarding the road to Arezzo and Rome, as well as the way into the Marche.

Castel di Poggio is almost the only ancient castle left of all those which once stood round about the city before the Commune was strong enough to break the *Signorotti* of the hills, who, ruling like brigands, took an easy toll of all who passed by. There it was

the Manzecca who lorded it as they would, infesting the woods of both valleys, while below at Vincigliata, it was first the Visdomini, and later the Usimbardi, who held sway, the latter certainly fierce enemies of the lords of Castel di Poggio.

The first notice I can find of the del Manzecca is unfortunately late and trivial enough. As bad churchmen it might seem as they were men, in the first years of the *trecento* Manzecca di Francesco del Manzecca with a friend of his, was summoned before the *Escutore* for having eaten meat in Lent. Their crimes, however, were certainly more serious than this, for in August, 1348, even in the midst of the plague that Boccaccio describes so well, the Commune decreed the destruction of the castle on the hill, which was done by Giusto di Bertolo, Francesco di Berto and Niccolò di Pagno, magistrates of Settignano, on the 12th August, eighty-six florins being paid for the work. Villani speaks of the son of Francesco del Manzecca, probably the very one who was fined for breaking the *quarresima* as "*orrevole cittadino di Por S. Piero*". He took part in the rising against the Duke of Athens, and sold his share of Castel di Poggio to Leonardo Strozzi. But the place soon after came into the possession of the Alessandri, who rebuilt it "*più sontuoso,*" and presently secured all the country round about, including Vincigliata. In 1469 we find them building the little oratorio which to-day stands below the castle, and which once held a precious work of the della Robbia. The Alessandri seem to have held Castel di Poggio till the seventeenth century when it passed to the Buonaccorsi. Thus it was not till the beginning of the nineteenth century that the Forteguerri of Pistoja, whose arms are on the tower over the porch, came into possession of it. During the eighteenth century

CASTEL DI POGGIO

for the most part, no one lived there, and we read in the *Stato dell' Anime*[1] during a long series of years, "*Villa di Castel di Poggio; nonvi abita nessuno*," and then this note by the priest under the year 1764, "*Si dà l'acqua santa, e per due anni il Fattore non l'ha voluta ed io non ci vado*". Whether Giovanni Acuto, the English condottiere, who is buried in the Duomo of Florence, sacked the place as it is said, in 1364, when he beat the Florentines on behalf of murdered Pisa, we know not.[2] We know indeed almost nothing of the early history of Castel di Poggio, yet happily one story at least has come down to us which, whether false or true, and indeed it may well be true enough, is worth the telling.

It is the old story over again of Romeo and Juliet. For it seems that in the year 1327 or thereabout, Selvaggia, the daughter of Giovanni Usimbardi, Lord

[1] See Anonimo (Giovanni Baroni), *Il Castello di Vincigliata e i suoi contorni* (Firenze, Tip. del Vocabolario, 1871), p. 55 *et seq.* The exact and specific reasons for the destruction we shall never know, since owing to the plague the Signoria kept insufficient chronicles for that year. The following note of its destruction, and the payment made for it, is taken from the *Libro d'Uscita del Comune*, July and August, 1348. See *op. cit. sup.*, Documento VIII. "Die duodecimo mensis augusti. Justo Bartoli, Francisci Berti et Niccholaio Pagni de Septignano magistris qui destruerunt et destrui fecerunt Castrum de Podio, filiorum Francisci del Manzecha, pro eorum et tamquam eorum salario et pro cibo et potu dato famulis Domini Capitanei et pluribus aliis personis qui interfuerunt et consilium, auxilium et favorem dederunt in destruttione et pro destruttione castri predicti, rigore stantiamenti super hoc editi per Dominos Priores et Vexilliferum justitie et Officium XII. bonorum virorum, et Gonfalonerios sotietatum populi florentini de mense jiuli proximi preteriti et apodixae Dominorum Priorum et Vexilliferi, in summa librarum Ducentas nonaginta octo et solidos octo florenorum largorum. In florenos auri lxxxxvi. ut supra computatos."

[2] "Cronaca Sanese," in *Muratori*, xv., 177, and my *Florence and Northern Tuscany* (Methuen, 1907), p. 99.

of the Castle of Vincigliata, fell in love with Simone del Manzecca of Castel di Poggio, the hereditary foe of all her race. She had seen him, the story says, in the little church just without the castle walls, soon after she had come to Vincigliata, for her childhood had been spent in Florence, where as it seems she had been seen and admired by Simone's elder brother —who knows—possibly that Manzecca who was so bad a churchman. Certainly his deeds were vile enough if the story is true. For as soon as he learned, and he had ways of learning, of the mutual love between Selvaggia and Simone, he tried to murder Giovanni Usimbardi, who had already refused to give him his daughter, and failing in this, sought to kill his brother also, lest he should prove more successful than himself. The lovers, in spite of the danger that hemmed them in, used to meet at a certain window in the walls, until one day Giovanni Usimbardi found them thus, and sent the youth about his business; who "vowed he would win the maid in spite of all". Now it seems that at this time Florence was struggling with that Alexander of Lucca, Castruccio Castracani, who was in the field with all his troops against the City of the Lily. Never a fighting people, the Florentines were glad enough to use the unruly *Signorotti* of the *contado* for their ends, and so Giovanni Usimbardi was hired or forced—not unwillingly on his part, we may be sure—to take the field. And ever before him in the place of danger rode an unknown knight with no device at all, save that in his helm he wore a strip of sky-blue ribbon; and though he saved Usimbardi's life not once nor twice, he kept his visor down. Now, when Castruccio had had enough, these two, old Usimbardi and that unknown knight, found themselves on the same way, homeward, and suddenly at a turning of the way

under the walls of Vincigliata, the knight declared himself, throwing his visor up, to be Simone del Manzecca. So Giovanni embraced him, and promised him that which he had rather possess than any throne in the world. So the tale goes; and Selvaggia watched it all at her window in the walls. But it was not to be. On the very eve of the wedding, as Selvaggia looked for Simone riding down through the woods from Castel di Poggio, where the road turns beyond the church, she saw three men leap out on him, striking him from his horse, and killing him under her eyes: Manzecca di Francesco di Manzecca had kept his vow. And Selvaggia, mad from that hour, shortly fled away also. Yet even to-day, the country folk tell you her spirit still haunts the precincts of the castle, and on a winter night when the north wind howls among the lashing cypresses, she may be seen, a girl as white as snow, watching at her window in the walls for the coming of her lover from the hills.

Something more historical, if less valuable than a romantic story, remains to us concerning Vincigliata. Following the road from Castel di Poggio, keeping to the right where it divides, and then (not without marking well the beautiful view towards Vallombrosa, over which some magic light from Umbria, just beyond, seems always to have fallen) winding ever downwards through the woods, you come first to the little church of S. Maria e S. Lorenzo[1] beside the way. A founda-

[1] Till 1672 the church was dedicated to S. Maria, but by a decree of Monsignor della Robbia, Bishop of Fiesole, on the 28th July of that year the church was placed under the protection of S. Lorenzo also. There is a story that Francesco degli Alessandri, Lord of Vincigliata, being very fond of hunting, was often late for Mass. The priest was used to wait for him, till one morning, losing patience, he began the service. A little later Francesco entered, and finding the Celebration already begun, fired his gun at the Padre in sudden anger, and killed him. See Baroni, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

tion of the twelfth century, it was always in the possession of the neighbouring castle, and indeed owes its restoration, not always discreet, to the Alessandri, for centuries lords of that place. Yet in spite of rebuilding, the tower is still a fine relic of the earlier times, and within is one of the most astonishing beauties of the Florentine country-side, a Madonna and Child by Giovanni del Biondo.[1] The picture, now but a fragment of a large altar-piece, is set in a modern canvas, where on one side is S. Domenico, and on the other S. Francesco, on their knees in adoration. Madonna is enthroned with the Divine Child standing on her knees, holding in His hand a little black bird with a red breast. She wears a marvellously lovely sky-blue mantle over a rosy tunic, while the Bambino is caught about the loins with a rainbow-coloured scarf. Over the throne is spread a patterned tapestry of blue and rose and gold. Giovanni del Biondo is a rare master

[1] I owe the attribution of this picture, and indeed my knowledge of its existence, to the kindness of Mr. F. Mason Perkins, whose careful work all who care for Italian painting are always so glad to find in the *Rassegna d'Arte*. I believe the picture has, as yet, been described by no one. I have found some details concerning it which may be of interest. The Inventario of Masselli of 1678 says that on the right of the high altar there was "una tavola antica bistonda, tocca d'oro, con suo grado entrovi più figure di Santi e nel mezzo una Madonna coperta con cielo e mantellino". The Inventario of Campani of 1682 thus describes it: "una Tavola antica dove è dipinta la Madonna nel mezzo, S. Niccola e S. Lorenzo alla destra, S. Bartolommeo e S. Alessandro vescovo alla sinistra". The picture it seems, was sawn to pieces and the four saints were placed next "the arch of the choir". Boni in his Inventario of 1816 thus describes it: "una Madonna dipinta sopra il legno, posta come in un quadretto bislungo nel mezzo, alquanto più indietro, e nel restante della tavola più infuori, vi sono effigiati S. Domenico e S. Francesco in atto di adorare detta imagine e questi depinta in tela". See also Baroni, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

only lately brought to light. He was born in Val d'Arno, and later became a citizen of Siena, whose art he seems to have loved better far than that of Florence. You may see more of his work in the gallery of Siena and in the Accademia of Florence.

There is but little else of interest in the church; a fine *lavabo* with the arms of the Alessandri in the Sacristy, and there too beside the door, an over-painted work, by some Florentine painter in a glass case, Madonna del Rosario, with S. Giovanni Battista and S. Antonio.[1]

This little church stands almost within the shadow of the Castle of Vincigliata. Called of old La Torre, Careggi, or La Castellaccia, it is only in our own time that it has borne the name of the village which stands above it on the hill. The first notice we have of it is from a document in the Badia Fiorentina referring to a sale on 29th August, 1031, of certain rights in the Church of S. Martino in Florence, held by four brothers, sons of Sichelmo, to Tregrimo, the son of Giovanni, a subdeacon.[2]

These four brothers, Pietro, Giovanni, Rambaldo and Manfredo, belonged to the great Visdomini clan, and at that time were in possession of Vincigliata. The Visdomini had been since the ninth century the legal administrators of the income of the Bishopric of Florence whenever the see was vacant. It is of them doubtless that Dante speaks :—

[1] In an Inventario of 1750 (*cf.* Baroni, *op. cit.*, p. 52) this ruined work is thus described: "Un quadro bislungo tinto color cupo, scorniciato in oro, ove avvi effigiata una SS. Vergine in tavola con cristallo davanti, rappresenta la Madonna del Rosario con S. Giovanni B. e S. Antonio".

[2] For all that concerns Vincigliata, see Leader Scott, *Vincigliata and Maiano* (Barbèra, 1891).

Così facean li padri di coloro
Che, sempre che la vostra Chiesa vaca
Si fanno grossi stando a consistoro.
—*Paradiso*, xvi., 112.

"Such the sires of those, who now,
As surely as your church is vacant flock
Into her consistory, and at leisure,
There stall them, and grow fat."[1]

They were with the Tosinghi known as the *Padroni e difenditori del vescovado*. Of very ancient stock, for we find a certain Buonaccorso Visdomini knighted by Charlemagne in 802, while another Cerrettiero fought under the Emperor Henry I. in 1002, they not only claimed the tithes of S. Martino in Florence, but founded the church which still bears their name, S. Michele Visdomini, in that city. They were always great Guelfs, and after the disaster of Montaperto, they fled the city, but they returned, for we hear of one of them as a favourite counsellor of the Duke of Athens, which may have caused the Manzecca of Castel di Poggio to head the conspiracy against that tyrant, in 1343. But so far as Vincigliata is concerned, we hear no more of the Visdomini. And it is not till in 1318 when the Scarlatti, who seem by then to have got possession of it, ceded their right to Giovanni di Bartolo Usimbardi that we hear of it again. The Usimbardi, however, well known as they were in Florence, seem early to have migrated to Colle, where till the sixteenth century they had a distinguished career.[2]

Indeed the days of the *Signorotti* were over. In 1335 Vincigliata was sold to Paolo the judge, son of Decco di Ceffino da Figline, for 4,060 gold florins, but

[1] Cary's translation; see also G. Villani, *Cronica*, iv., 10.

[2] Francesco Usimbardi was then the father of Usimbardo, Bishop of Colle, Pietro, Bishop of Arezzo, and Lorenzo, secretary to the Grand Duke Ferdinando I. *Cf.* Leader Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

he did not hold it, selling it later to the Buonaccorsi family, the bankers, rich enough one may think therefore to possess a useless stronghold such as this had come to be. However they too fell with the Petrucci and the Bardi, when Edward III. of England could not pay his debts after the victories of Crecy and Poitiers; and then in 1345 came the general ruin. To pay their creditors the Buonaccorsi sold Vincigliata in that disastrous year to Niccolò di Ugo degli Albizzi. Then followed the plague, and Sir John Hawkwood, who is said to have utterly destroyed the place, and certainly about 1367 the Albizzi, Alessandri now, rebuilt it, for in the wars Vincigliata had come again to have its uses. But the end was near. When the mad quarrels of Neri and Bianchi were hushed Vincigliata became rather a villa than a castle, and the change is marked for us very happily in two descriptions some eighty years asunder. In 1345 when Niccolò degli Albizzi bought it, La Torre is described as "*Turris cum domibus bassis, curia, logiis, giardinis et pergulis*," while in 1427 in another deed we read of it as "*un palagio da Signore merlato chon volte sotterra, antimura et pollaio, orto e vigna interno la quale lavoriamo a nostre mani*".[1] It was to this palace, now a mere pleasure house, that Niccolò, son of Bartolommeo degli Alessandri, brought his bride, Agnoletta Ricasoli, in 1381. Through two splendid centuries the Alessandri lived there—it was their country-house; in the seventeenth century it was already a little neglected, and by 1751 the place was quite deserted, so that in the *Stato delle Anime* conserved in the archives of the little church we read under that year: "*Al Palazzo*

[1] "A tower with a few dwelling-houses, offices, loggia, and pergolas" . . . "a palace with battlements and vaults, an outer wall enclosing fowl-houses, orchard and vineyard, within the precincts". *Cf.* Baroni, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

rovinato dei Signori Alessandri non ci abita nessuno; e si dà l'acqua santa". This is repeated for a long series of years. As at Castel di Poggio, no one lived there, but one sprinkled it with Holy Water.

The Castelaccio, as it was then called, was a ruin. In 1766 we read: "*Villa del Palazzaccio rovinato dei Signori Alessandri non ci abita nessuno e si dà l'acqua santa e i contadini tengono la chiave*". But it cannot have been utterly uninhabitable, for in 1769 as in 1758 "*qualche volta l'abita una stanza il Sig. Gaetano Alessandri quando viene per suoi bisogni*". At last in 1827 Signor Gaetano Alessandri sold the place to Lorenzo di Bartolommeo Galli of Rovezzano, and in 1855 Baron Alfred von Reumont on a visit to Settignano, thus describes it: "From Settignano I ascended to these ruins marked out by a double circle of walls, of which the outer and larger circle had in many places disappeared. I entered by the only gate left into the court, which brought me to a ground-floor with a half-ruined vaulted roof above which the quadrangular walls threatened to fall. The remains of the stairs and loggia, the fragments of battlements and cornices are buried under a heap of fallen masonry and stones, overgrown with thorns, nettles, and creeping plants."[1]

It was in 1855 that Temple Leader bought the place, and, determined to restore it, trained an architect, Giuseppe Fancelli of San Martino a Mensola, to do the work. Then rose the somewhat fantastic castle we see to-day. There is but little of interest in the place, almost all the works of art are copies, like the castle itself, and it is thus only a few terra-cottas by the della Robbia school that call for our attention: a Pietà with two penitents from the Ritiro Capponi in Florence

[1] Anonimo (Baron Alfred von Reumont), *Maiano, Vincigliata, Settignano*, trans. by Alessandri Papini (Firenze, Barbèra, 1876), pp. 32-33.

for instance, two angels in the dining-hall, bearing candelabra, a Madonna with S. Francesco and S. Chiara, much restored from the Pia Casa di Lavoro; two small predella scenes, a Pietà and a Nativity, and a small Tabernacle, all in the upper Cortile; in the chapel a Christ, an Annunciation from the Pia Casa, and a Madonna in a niche from the Palazzo Corsi. All the other so-called della Robbia there are imitations by Ginori.[1] It is not such things that will call us out of the woods—that forest of cypress through which the road winds down to Ponte a Mensola. Lingering there where so often the nightingales sing, slowly, slowly, we make our way into the valley, and so to Florence in the twilight.

[1] Maud Cruttwell, *Luca and Andrea della Robbia, and their successors* (Dent, 1902), p. 343.

IV

PONTE ALLE MOSSE, PERETOLA, PETRIOLO, CAMPI, AND BROZZI

THE way to Campi beside Bisenzio, *Strada Pistoiese*, leaves the city by the Porta al Prato, crossing the plain at first not far from the river, till at Peretola it forsakes the Pistoian Way for a northern branch of it, *Strada Lucchese*, in the shadow of the mountains; but the tram for Campi starts from Piazza della Stazione, and as the road, on leaving the city, runs for some distance through a mere modern suburb, it will be as well to use it so far, at least, as Ponte alle Mosse.

Ponte alle Mosse, an ancient bridge over Mugnone, often rebuilt, gets its name from the Palio which the Commune decreed should start thence, and entering the city at Porta al Prato, should finish at Porta alla Croce towards Settignano.

It was the victory of Campaldino, fought on S. Barnabas Day, 11th June, 1289, that this palio celebrated, and the race was run in honour of that saint. For, arrived under the walls of Arezzo after that famous battle which Corso Donati may be said to have won with his Pistoiesi, the Florentines, Villani tells us,[1] "caused the Palio for the Feast of S. Giovanni to be run there, *e rizzaronsi più difici, e manganaronvisi*

[1] Villani, *Cronica*, lib. vii., cap. 132.

S. MARIA A PERETOLA

Asini con la mitra in capo per rimproccio del loro Vescovo".

This, however, was not the only race, as it seems, that was run there. From 2nd October to 5th October, 1325, Castruccio Castracani, Signor of Lucca, after beating the Florentines at Altopascio,[1] and it was no small victory, encamped with all his troops in Peretola, that little town in the plain some four miles from the city, where the roads for Pistoja and for Lucca divide. Having burned and destroyed all the plain from the river to the hills about Careggi and Rifredi, according to Villani, on the 4th October, in order to shame and insult the Florentines still further, he caused three different sorts of Palii to be run under the very walls of Florence, from the bridge called *alle Mosse* to Peretola. The first was run by men on horseback, the second by men on foot, and the third by the loose women, naked all of them, who had followed the camp; and not a man dared venture out of the City of Florence to take vengeance for this thing.[2]

The bridge to-day, rising as it does, high above the river, affords a very beautiful view of Vallombrosa and the hills behind Fiesole and Settignano. And then just across the Mugnone, on either side the highway, is the park of Prince Demidoff, the gardens of that villa which was once the Convent of S. Donato.

S. Donato a Torri was of old an Augustinian monastery, occupied by the Canons Regular. It was here in 1187 when the church was consecrated that Gerardo, Archbishop of Florence, sent by Pope Clement III., first preached to the *popolo Fiorentino* the second crusade, while, after the sermon, the Priore

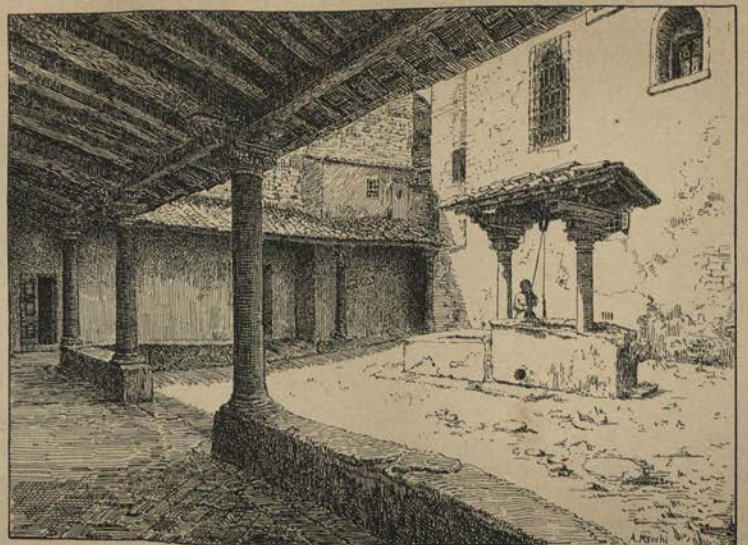
[1] See my *Florence and Northern Tuscany* (Methuen, 1907), p. 96.

[2] G. Villani, *Cronica*, lib. ix., cap. 31, 37.

of S. Donato gave to Pazzo dei Pazzi, leader of the host about to set out for the Holy Land, a superb banner, blazoned with the Cross of the People.

The Augustinians, however, in 1239 were succeeded by the *Frati Humiliati*, an order of White Benedictines that we first hear of in the time of Barbarossa in the beginning of the thirteenth century. Originally founded by certain Lombard exiles in Northern Germany, the *Humiliati* were at first, at any rate, a lay brotherhood, which had learned in exile the craft of weaving wool. Such wool as was to be had in Tuscany, a land of olives and vines almost without pasture, was poor enough, and it seems to have been only after the advent of the *Humiliati* to S. Donato a Torri that the greatest of Florentine industries began to assert itself, foreign wools being brought in a raw state to the city, and sold, dressed, and woven into cloth, in all the cities of Europe and the East. Later the brotherhood formed itself into a Religious Order under a Bull of Innocent III., and though from that time the brethren seem no longer to have worked at their craft themselves, they directed the work of laymen whom they enrolled and employed, busying themselves for the most part with new inventions, and the management of what soon became an immense business. Their fame soon spread all over Italy, for, as Villari tells us,[1] "wherever a house of their Order was established, the wool-weaving craft immediately made advance," so that in 1339 the Commune of Florence invited them to establish a house near the city, as they did in S. Donato a Torri which was given them by the Signoria. By 1250, however, we read that the Guild Masters were grumbling at the distance of the Frati from the city, so that in the following year

[1] Villari, *History of Florence* (London, 1905), p. 318.



CLOISTER OF S. MARIA A PERETOLA

they removed to S. Lucia sul Prato within the city, under promise of exemption from all taxes; and in 1256 they founded a church and convent in Borgo Ognissanti. S. Donato a Torri seems in 1251 to have passed again to the Augustinian Order, to the nuns of S. Casciano a Decimo, and we find that in 1278 the Contessa Beatrice of Tuscany left *Lire cinquanta alle donne del Monastero di S. Donato a Torri.* About thirty years later, in 1309, the nuns abandoned the Rule of S. Augustine for the Cistercian Rule of S. Bernard. In 1325 the convent fell into the hands of the Lucchesi troops under Castruccio Castracani. Whether they damaged it or not we do not know, but they certainly put the nuns to flight. Two hundred years later, during the siege of Florence in 1529, it was at the mercy of the German troops of Charles V., and again the nuns fled away, taking refuge in the Convent of S. Maria Maddalena near the Porta a Pinti, which already in the fourteenth century they had been called upon to reform. It was during this siege that the German troopers destroyed the beautiful *Cenacolo* of Masaccio in the refectory.

Under the Grand Dukes the nuns returned to S. Donato, where they continued till their suppression was ordered by the French Government in 1809. Then after 1814 Prince Demidoff bought the place, and turned it into a palace. When his son, who had become the husband of Mathilde Bonaparte, succeeded him, the place was called in her honour Villa Mathilde, a name it bears to this day.

Passing along the highway through these gardens, you come in something less than a mile to a turning on the right which leads to the bizarre tower visible from the *Strada Pistoiese*, called Torre degli Agli. One of the most important of the villas on this side of the city, it has played no little part in the social

history of Florence. In the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries it was the property of the Agli family, who, in the person of Messer Barnaba di Giovanni, gave so great a sum towards the building of the convent of S. Domenico at Fiesole. Before the end of the sixteenth century, however, while the villa belonged to Caterina degli Agli, wife of Jacopo Gianfigliazzi, Grand Duke Ferdinand waited there to receive his consort, Cristina of Lorraine. Soon after, however, the Agli sold the place, the Panciatichi buying it for some 2,330 scudi.[1] Then in 1608 the new proprietors received there Maria Maddalena of Austria, wife of Grand Duke Cosimo II., who, with much pomp, prepared thence to enter Florence in state.

Returning along Via Torre degli Agli to the corner where four roads meet, you come upon an old Tabernacle, Tabernacolo di Antonio Veneziano, they call it, a wayside shrine covered with the spoiled, but still lovely, frescoes of that master, or one of his pupils. Ruined though they be by time and Arno's floods, we may still see there the Deposition from the Cross, the Death and Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, and the Last Judgment. Then, following the road to the right, northward, in a few paces we come upon the very ancient church of S. Maria a Novoli.

The first record we have of this place dates from the twelfth century, but the church we see is not so old as that, for a disastrous flood in the first year of the thirteenth century destroyed it, and indeed more than once afterwards it suffered a like fate, so that today it is mainly a building of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, though the Campanile is doubtless older. It is not, however, for the church itself we have left the highway, but for those precious things which

[1] *Cf.* Carocci, *I Dintorni di Firenze* (Firenze, 1906), vol. i., p. 338.

it contains: a picture of the school of Ghirlandajo, very lovely and fair, Madonna enthroned with her Child on her knees, and beside her SS. Peter and Paul, Jacopo and Antonio Abate; and a small painting on a gold ground of the Virgin and Bambino in the manner of Giotto; while we shall not pass by without a thought a Crucifix by Gianbologna.

If, however, it be architecture we seek, nothing surely could please us better than the Church of S. Cristofano. Returning to Via della Torre degli Agli, and turning to the right, we follow it for some half-mile, and there by the wayside, where four roads meet, is S. Cristofano a Novoli, a beautiful building of the fifteenth century, and under the portico is a great fresco of the time, a colossal S. Cristofano, bearing our Lord on his shoulder.

A very ancient foundation, the church was rebuilt in the fifteenth century after one of the disastrous floods that, through all the Middle Age, ruined this part of the valley of Arno, and was well restored in 1837. To-day it is in the patronage of the Buonomini di San Martino.[1]

Just here the Via della Torre degli Agli runs into the Strada Pistoiese, and some four hundred yards farther on is the village of Peretola, where in the Piazza, before the church of S. Maria, the Strada Lucchese leaves the Pistoian Way.

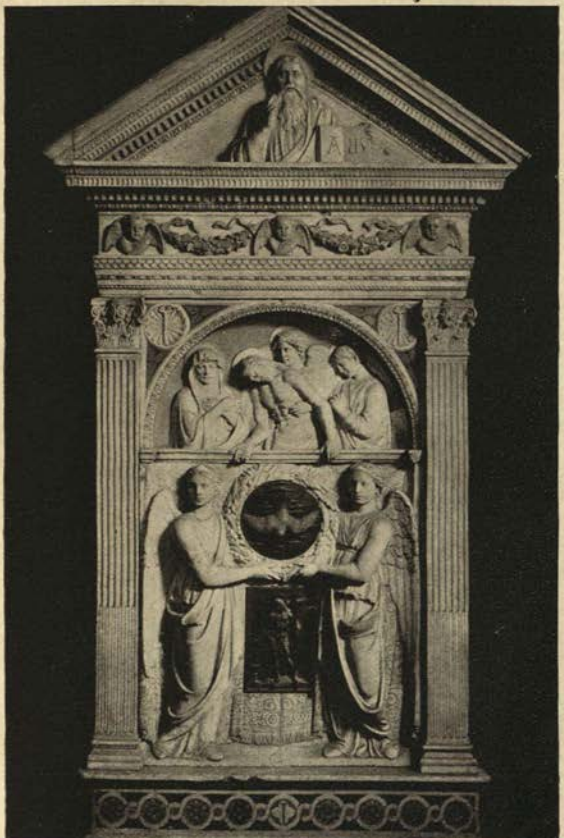
Peretola is famous for other things beside the encampment of Castruccio Castracani, for the plaiting of straw, for instance, by which, it seems, it lives. Indeed, everywhere in this long suburb of Florence, for it is little more, you may see the women, half a dozen of them in a group sometimes, plaiting straw in the doorways and in the street, while the goats pass, herd after

[1] See my *Florence and Northern Tuscany* (Methuen, 1907), p. 213.

herd, and are milked at the doorstep — you may see it as you pass. Here, too, long and long ago, Cardinal Niccolò da Prato took refuge when he was compelled to leave the city, having failed in his mission to make peace between the Bianchi and the Neri.[1] It was in the villa of Sennuccio di Senno Benucci that he hid himself on the evening of the 8th May, 1304. And here too lived the famous family of Vespucci, deserting the place, however, in the thirteenth century for Borgo Ognissanti within the walls, where Amerigo was born.

It is not, however, any of these famous or picturesque things that brings us to Peretola to-day, but the little church of Madonna there, S. Maria Assunta in the Piazza. Probably one of the oldest village churches in the country round Florence, the tower still keeps a memory of its ancient beauty. S. Maria a Peretola was never in the possession of a religious order, but was always served by secular clergy. We hear little or nothing of it till the last year of the fourteenth century, when Pope Boniface IX. in a Bull permitted a baptismal font to be placed there, lest Florence should prove too far, or too hard to reach in the floods of winter. Always in the patronage of the Ospedale di S. Maria Nuova, it was the Bishop Leonardo Buonfede, *Spedalingo* in the middle of the fifteenth century, who enriched it with the precious works of art it possesses. It was for him that in 1466 Giusto d'Andrea painted the arms of the Ospedale on the façade, and in the same year under the beautiful portico the same artist painted in fresco S. Antonio Abate enthroned between S. Jacopo and S. Egidio, while in the lunette above the door is another fresco, very lovely, earlier too, of Madonna with Bambino Gesù, and two half figures of

[1] See my *Florence and Northern Tuscany* (Methuen, 1907), p. 186.



Alinari

A TABERNACLE

By Luca della Robbia, in the Church of S. Maria, Peretola

saints, and under, three small *tondi*, our Lord between two saints and apostles.

Within, the church has been lately restored, yet we may still find there the simple and beautiful font, a work perhaps by Francesco Ferrucci. In the north aisle is a half figure of our Lord, and opposite in the south aisle a half figure of S. Zanobi, fourteenth century works, while, when the church was restored in 1888, frescoes were discovered over the altar of S. Leonardo, incidents in the life of that saint, beneath which is a Crucifixion between S. Lucia and S. Caterina that recalls dimly the work of Filippino Lippi.

But by far the most beautiful and the most precious work of art in the church is the Ciborium of Luca della Robbia behind the high altar. The Tabernacle itself, of the most perfect early Renaissance design, almost classic in its simple severity, is of marble; under a round arch above the tiny bronze doors, on either side of which an angel stands, holding, as it were, the Host in their hands, is a Pietà, while above is a terra-cotta frieze of three cherubim caught in two garlands, and above again, in the triangle, God the Father at Benediction. Commissioned by the Ospedale of S. Maria Nuova in 1441,[1] this is the first example of Luca's glazed work of which we have documentary evidence. It is lovely, this little hidden work by a master, rare in Florence, and hardly to be seen out of Italy: yet one may perhaps question the wisdom of mixing terra-cotta and marble; those brightly coloured enamels seem to take away from the beauty of the more precious material, and in some way I cannot explain to rob the work of a certain dignity.[2]

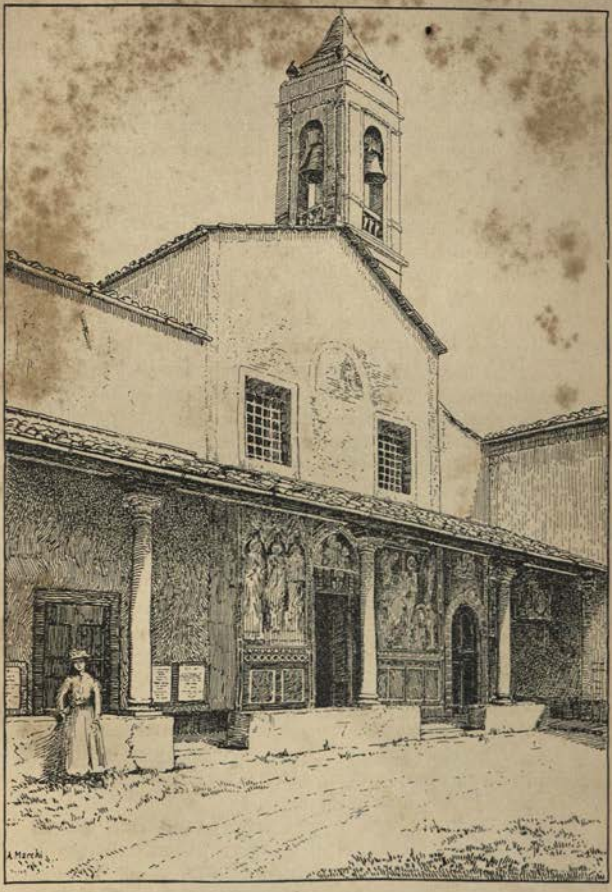
[1] See Maud Cruttwell, *Luca and Andrea della Robbia* (Dent, 1902), p. 69.

[2] Miss Cruttwell, *op. cit.*, p. 69, tells us that the Tabernacle was originally made for the Chapel of S. Luke in S. Maria Nuova.

Wandering out of the church into the spoiled, but still beautiful cloister, it was with some surprise I found a stage erected there with footlights and the music stands for an orchestra, and all the accompaniments of a village theatre. Certainly all such rubbish ought to be cleared away, and yet—who knows if in such a place as Peretola—and it has had a bad name for long enough—the cloister of the church may not be the only private place in the village, since in Italy privacy is hard to come by anywhere, and most of all perhaps in such a place as this. And it is a miracle play, be sure, they act there for *soldi* in the evening.

In the Piazza di S. Maria a Peretola the *Strada Lucchese* leaves the *Strada Pistoiese*, which we follow, taking therefore the road to the left till at no great distance we come to Petriolo, really a continuation of Peretola. Petriolo has very ancient memories, going back to the early part of the eleventh century. It is not, however, in these that we are interested, but in the little church of S. Biagio. Founded certainly in the eleventh century, as the semicircular apse attests, it has suffered many and many a restoration. Before the church is a sort of portico, and under this are some frescoes of the early fifteenth century in the manner of Bicci di Lorenzo; they represent the Trinity, the Deposition from the Cross, S. Niccolò of Bari, S. Bartolommeo, S. Jacopo and S. Cristofano. Over the doorway, where the arms of the People and of the Pitti family, the patrons of the church, are set, is a lunette in which one of the pupils of Taddeo Gaddi has painted in fresco Madonna and our Lord between S. Biagio and S. Lucia.

Within, the church is quite modernised, but Andrea di Giovanni has painted there very sweetly the story of Tobias and the Angel, and some pupil of Fra



S. BIAGIO A PETRIOLO

Bartolommeo Madonna enthroned with her Son between S. John the Divine, S. Nicholas of Tolentino, S. Luke and S. Francis of Assisi, while a charming ciborium of marble, carved with angels, recalls the work of Desiderio da Settignano.

Following again Strada Pistoiese, it is but a little way to Quaracchi. "*Ad Quarache nella corte del monastero di S. Martino*" we read in an instrument quoted by Repetti, and dating, he tells us, from 866; "*Ad Claras Aquas*," as we may read to-day on any of the books issued by the Franciscans, who have a convent there. Well, it is for the sake of the convent we are come to Quaracchi. Once a villa of the Rucellai, built, as it is said, by Leon Alberti, that quiet convent just off the highway, is one of the most delightful and most hospitable places in all Val d'Arno. It has a garden too, full of vines and vegetables and wild flowers, and there in the courtyard, just out of the sun, is the printing press, where the Friars have already set up and published the works of S. Bonaventura, *Ad Claras Aquas*, as the imprint tells us. There is perhaps nothing at all precious in their library, full as it is of useful and splendid volumes which they need for their work: but in that quiet great room lined with books, with galleries too, so that you may climb among them, one seems to have passed into a new world from the noisy and obscure streets of Peretola and Petriolo. And for kindness, too, they have printed there a little volume of the works of S. Francis, *Opuscoli di S. Francesco*, which you may carry away for remembrance.

It is a walk of about twenty minutes, hardly more, following the road immediately opposite the great gate of the convent to the Strada Lucchese. There you find the tram line, and as it will be as well to go thence to Campi in the tram you may rest at

Quaracchi as long as you will, as long as is necessary, or you are able, meanwhile.[1]

At the corner where you come into the Strada Lucchese there is a beautiful little tabernacle, Oratorio della Cupola, painted in fresco by some early fifteenth century painter; the Virgin kneels weeping beside the body of her Son, beside her are S. John the Divine and S. Joseph of Arimathea, while behind two angels are waiting.

Campi, once a strong *castello*, now a large *borgo*, is mentioned for the first time in a *privilegio* of Charlemagne, which gave to the monks of S. Bartolommeo a Ripoli the willows there. Such a document tells us, if we read between the lines, the whole secret of the place, half swamp, half pasture, crossed by deep ditches and dykes, and often subject to floods. And indeed it is but the most typical spot of a whole region of such places, where the rivers were both friend and foe, where the churches have been spoiled by the floods, but where the meadows are green and pleasant. From the earliest times, Campi had been the dwelling place, or at least the place of *villeggiatura* of many very powerful families, of which the greatest was perhaps the house of Mazzinghi. And far though it is from the city, it by no means escaped her tumults. For if the struggle of Guelf and Ghibelline was not actually born there, it suffered after Montaperto more than any other town, since the Ghibellines on their return not only refused to admit the Guelfs, but utterly destroyed their houses and burned their lands.

[1] The trams for Campi leave Peretola at 10.27, 12.47, 3.22 and 5.22. If you leave Florence by the tram leaving Piazza della Stazione at 9.20 A.M., you will have ample time to catch the 12.47 from Peretola (which will pass the place where you strike the Strada Lucchese some five minutes later), and so to lunch in Campi, where you arrive at 1.10 P.M. But see the time-table published by the company to be had in Piazza Signoria.

AT CAMPI BISENZIO

Small though it was, its position on the Strada Lucchese lent it a vast importance. Castruccio found time to destroy it in 1325, and Giovanni di Oleggio, Captain of Visconti's army, in 1352 made his camp there. Therefore in 1376 the Republic fortified the place carefully, so that it became one of the strongest places in the neighbourhood of the city. Of these fortifications only the ruins are left, though the work along Bisenzio is almost perfect. The gates, which Carocci tells us were standing till the middle of the last century, were then thrown down, others being built with a new bridge over the Bisenzio.

For Campi had become the centre of a great agricultural district, where the straw industry was perhaps the chief source of wealth. It seems that the corn is sown on the higher *piane* of the mountains, on Mont' Amiata, for instance, where the colour of the stalk is a marvellous gold. The seed thus grown is sown the second year in Val d'Arno, and the straw used for making the famous Leghorn hats. All through the Arno valley from Peretola to Pisa, you may see the women sitting in their doorways binding the straw into different shapes of *cappelli*, or plaiting it in preparation into long strips; but it is in the country round Campi, Brozzi, Signa and Lastra that the industry is most flourishing; the hats thus made being quite as good and lasting as the famous Panama, but alas, less fashionable. One of the finest sun-hats for ladies with about fifteen or even twenty plaits to the inch costs about fifteen lire, the maker getting from two to three francs for her labour.

In the old days Campi was head of that district of the *Contado* of Florence, which included both Signa and Brozzi, it was within her walls that the Podestà took up his residence, and her Palazzo Comunale, even to-day, preserves still the many coats of these officers.

The great church of Campi is the Pieve di S. Stefano. A *pieve* was not a parish church, but the church at the head, as it were, of a collection of parishes, where was the baptismal font of the district. The parish priest is the *curato*, whereas the *pievano* is a much more important personage, having under him *priorie* and *rettorie*. Indeed, in the old days, he was in some sort Sindaco of a whole population or community. The bells of the *pieve* would call together the people in any danger, or to give thanks to God, and indeed you often find, carved on the bells for this purpose: *Ad Dei gloriam et Patriae liberationem.*

The Pieve di S. Stefano at Campi is of very ancient origin, and certainly older than the *castello* in which it stands. Restored and rebuilt many times, and in 1812 covered with stucco, the old church has been spoiled or hidden under more recent work. Very few works of art remain there: a crucifix which is still held in great veneration, and which dates from the time of the *Flagellanti*, a picture in the manner of Filippino Lippi, of Madonna enthroned between S. Bartolommeo, S. Giovanni Battista and S. Antonio Abate, and a statue of S. Giovanni Battista by one of the della Robbia, being all that is left of the riches which were once in her keeping.

But the most interesting building left in Campi is the Rocca of the Republic, now a *fattoria* which in great part, though ruined, preserves its ancient tower and platform and gate, and certain chambers, too, so that it is one of the fairest remnants of a military fortress of that age left in Tuscany.

The Strada Lucchese crosses the Bisenzio on its way north and west, and about half a mile from the bridge, beside the highway, stands the old church of S. Maria Assunta, completely spoiled now, but guarding still in

the Cappella di S. Jacopo some old frescoes of the life of that saint by the school of the Gaddi; while from the same hand, over an altar in the north aisle, you may see Madonna enthroned between S. Giovanni and S. Lorenzo: with the date of the work, 1332.

Round about are the villas of the great Signori, Rucellai, who were patrons of S. Maria Novella, Strozzi, who own the huge palace in Via Tornabuoni, Davanzati too, Cordoni and Ginori.

Returning a little on your way from S. Maria Assunta, taking the first road to the right out of Strada Lucchese, you soon come to the Church of S. Lorenzo, and then, about a quarter of mile farther on, taking the road to the left, and after turning to the right again when you may, you come presently to the church of S. Martino, which was under the patronage of the Mazzinghi family, and in spite of its modernity, of very old foundation. There is still preserved a beautiful picture in the manner of Domenico Ghirlandajo, Madonna with our Lord in her lap between S. Martin and S. Peter Martyr, and two terra-cotta statues of S. Roch and S. Sebastian by some pupil of the della Robbia.

Still following the road southward past the church, in another quarter of a mile you turn to the left, then to the right, and so follow the way till you come to Strada Pistoiese. Turning to the left along it, back towards Florence, in a few hundred yards you come to the *borgo* of S. Piero a Ponti, a straggling town that stretches for about half a mile along the road, in the midst of which is the sixteenth century bridge of Stefano Lancelli, which Vasari praises so highly.

It is not, however, for that we have come to S. Piero, but to see the church there from which the *borgo* gets its name, where over the door is a beautiful lunette of della Robbia ware, representing Madonna

with our Lord between S. Peter and S. Paul; while in the church itself is a spoiled picture in the Byzantine manner.

Not far away, due southward on the road which at first follows the right bank of the Bisenzio, turning out of Strada Pistoiese, just before you cross the bridge, is the Church of S. Mauro, in the village of that name, which still keeps two works of the della Robbia school, a tabernacle and a Madonna under the Eternal Father with saints and angels. By this way, too, you may reach S. Donnino a Brozzi without following Strada Pistoiese, that busy way, for, returning a few yards on your way, you follow the road back through the village to the right, soon crossing the Bisenzio, and then following the road up-stream to S. Donnino a Brozzi.

Brozzi itself, with its *subborghi*, is perhaps the most mediæval, as it is certainly the most important of the little towns in the neighbourhood of Florence along the Strada Pistoiese. It seems to live for the most part by the manufacture of hats and all such things as may well be made out of straw. Like its neighbours, Campi and Peretola, it suffered in the wars of Castruccio, but again like them it rose from its ashes, and is to-day, as in the past, full of industry, and labouring men and women. It is not, however, to see their persistence and long-suffering we are come to so noisy and even wretched a place, but for the sake of its old churches, which still preserve a memory here and there of the beauty that is from of old.

S. Donnino a Brozzi, at the western extremity of the little town, not far from Arno, dates certainly from the eleventh century, where in 1046 it is mentioned in a Bull of Gregory XI. But the church we see to-day is for the most part a building of the seventeenth century, yet like so many of its sisters in the coun-

try round Florence, it keeps still, as though for love, a beautiful memory of the past. Here that memory takes the form of a Giottesque *ancona* in tempera on a gold ground in three compartments: in the midst, Our Lady enthroned with Bambino Gesù, and beside her S. Antonio Abate, S. Giuliano, S. Catherine and S. Lucia, while on either side are S. Donnino himself and S. John Baptist. In the *gradino* is the story of S. Donnino's life and death.

Returning on our way, and following the road to the Strada Pistoiese, we come just there to the Church of S. Andrea, restored and rebuilt in the seventeenth century, but of very ancient foundation: while the campanile is a really beautiful piece of work from the quattrocento. And here indeed there is more than a memory of ancient beauty, for S. Andrea seems to have kept nearly all her treasures about her. It was a pupil of Ghirlandajo[1] who, under that Baptism of our Lord by a pupil of Verrocchio, painted a fresco of Madonna enthroned, holding our Lord on her knees to bless us, between that pensive S. Giuliano with his sword, and that elegant S. Sebastian with his three arrows. After all, is it Madonna who sits there so demurely, or Aphrodite herself, dressed in the Renaissance fashion, between Cupid her son, and Mars her lover, caught suddenly there one summer day in Val d'Arno?

It is, however, an altogether different impression we receive from the other fifteenth century picture there by Francesco di Giovanni Botticini,[1] where Madonna sits again enthroned, but with a sort of sadness, her little Son just held on her knees, clasping a struggling bird in His hand: and on one side are S. Jacopo

[1] Mr. Berenson's attribution, most generously and kindly communicated to me for my use.

with clasped hands, and S. Antonio Abate, and on the other S. Bartolommeo and S. Sebastian.

Above this beautiful picture is an Annunciation in a lunette, of the school of Alessio Baldovinetti, and under, this inscription: *Questa capella chon tutti suoi ornamenti a facto fare Symo di Domenico Cecherelli perimedio de lanima sua nel* MCCCCLXXX.

Not far away is a delicate crucifix painted by Pesello, and another fresco by a pupil or follower of Fra Bartolommeo, of S. Alberto and S. Sigismundo, with this curious inscription, referring to the malaria which once infested all this region so frequently flooded by Arno:—

S. Alberto dovoto dela febre quotidima et terziana
S. Sigismondo dovoto dela febre quartana MDLXXX.

While the triptych, where in the midst we see the Annunciation, and on either side S. Eustachio and S. Antonio Abate, is a late work of the quattrocento.

Nor is S. Martino a Brozzi, the pieve of this district, in a by-way to the left along Strada Pistoiese, without its beauties, though they be less rare. The frescoes under the portico, early fifteenth century work, I think, have been spoiled by the weather, but within, though restored, the font is beautiful with mosaic, and in the sacristy are two fifteenth century pictures, fine enough for Florence herself, a Madonna and Child between S. Martin and S. Francis, S. John Baptist and S. Antonio Abate; and a Madonna with our Lord and S. Giovannino. But for me, best of all things in Brozzi, is the wayside shrine close to the Fattoria Orsini. I found it, as, weary one day, I waited for the tram—that dreadful tram that makes pandemonium of the way right into Florence. It is a fresco of the *Presepio* you see there beside the way, where in the valley beside Arno, Christ was born, and Mary worshipped him with Joseph her husband, and the ass and the ox

Alinari

MADONNA AND CHILD WITH SAINTS

From the fresco by Francesco Botticini in the Church of S. Andrea, Brozzi

Alinari

THE NATIVITY

From the fresco by Mainardi in the Tabernacle at Brozzi (Fattoria Orsini)

stood in the stalls beside them under the thatch. All the way to Florence that picture by the wayside haunted me, and now that I am far away, and maybe shall never see it again, it still comes back to me as on that summer evening, when, weary in the heat, I stayed for a little in the shadow beside the vineyard, while the wind whispered over the olives, and the bells of S. Martino told me, as the picture said, that Christ was born again—yes, here in Val d'Arno, and not least—if it might be so—in my heart.

V

MONTE OLIVETO, PONTE A GREVE, SETTIMO, LEGNAJA

THE Porta S. Frediano by which Via Pisana leaves the city is one of the last of the old gates that are still in use to-day as a *barriera*. The way thence, as the name of the road tells us, leads to Pisa, and by that way and by that gate Charles VIII. of France entered the city and Rinaldo degli Albizzi left it after his night-long interview with Martin V. in S. Maria Novella. A quarter of a mile beyond the gates, on a hill, still covered with ilex and chestnut, stands the Monastery of Monte Oliveto, which gets its name from the monks of Monte Oliveto Maggiore in the Sanese. In the end of the thirteenth century, as it seems, there had been a little oratory here called S. Maria del Castagno, belonging to a Confraternity of merchants and *artefici* in Florence, who met there on the last Sunday in each month, and for this reason seem to have been called *Ciccialardoni*. Seven years later, in 1297, a Confraternity *di Gesù Cristo* had established itself there. It was this latter company which in 1334 resigned the place to Bernardo Tolomei, who introduced his rule there.

The Congregation of the Blessed Virgin of Monte Oliveto was founded by Blessed Bernardo Tolomei of

Siena in 1319. It seems that Bernardo, being blind, recovered his sight as by a miracle, and in thankfulness to the Blessed Virgin forsook the world and retired to a barren hill called Accona, now so gay with olives, between Siena and Monte Cetona, founding there the Olivetan Congregation under the rule of S. Benedict; and Madonna dressed his monks in white. As I have said, the Badia here on this hill outside Porta S. Frediano was founded in 1334. The church of the monastery, built in the middle of the fourteenth century, was placed under the protection of S. Bartolommeo to please Bartolo di Capponcino Capponi, who made the Order his heir. Whether it was destroyed by Giovanni Acuto or another I know not, but in 1472 the beautiful church we see to-day was built there, perhaps by some pupil of Michelozzo's, and though it was restored in 1725 it still keeps much of the beauty that the fifteenth century builder contrived to give it.

It is not, however, a monastery we see there to-day but a military hospital, and though the church is still gracious and lovely, it seems, in the absence of the monks, to be as it were widowed, in spite of its wealth of not very important pictures, the best and most famous of which have long since been carried away to the *Uffizi* and the *Accademia*.[1] Among lesser work, however, there still remains a damaged fresco of the Last Supper by Sodoma, a beautiful and eager thing without the sensuousness that soon became almost a mannerism in so much of his work. Indeed in this fresco we find a certain virile splendour that haunts us for days, in the beautiful evil face of Judas for instance, the impetuous energy of S. Peter.

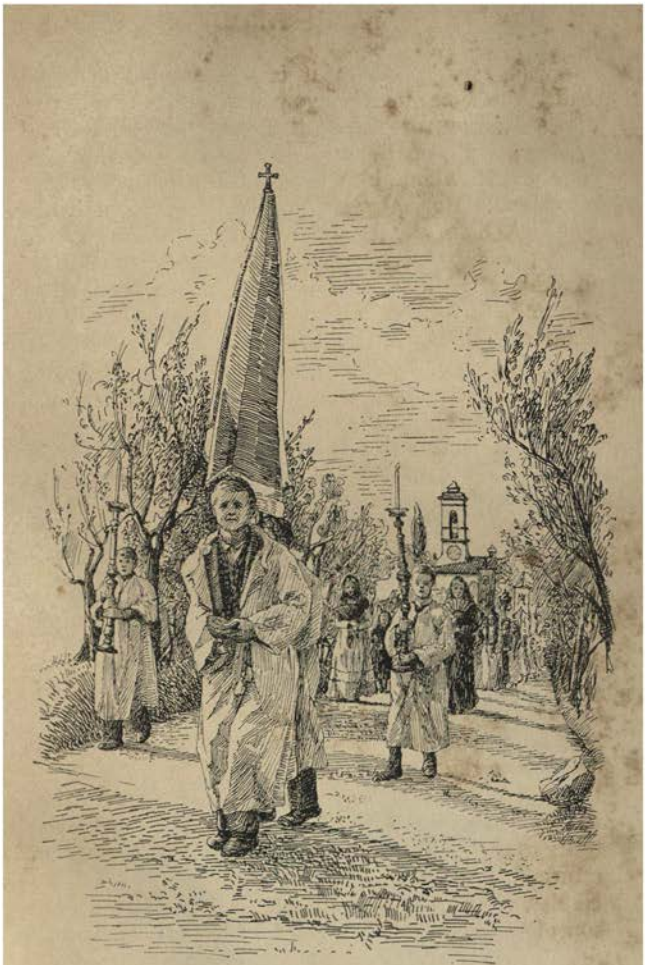
[1] For instance, the *Annunciation* of Verrocchio (Uffizi, No. 1288) was painted for the chapel of the Badia here and for long hung in the sacristy of the Church of S. Bartolommeo. It was taken to the Uffizi in 1867.

From Monte Oliveto it is a pleasant road, some half a mile long, that brings you to Bellosguardo, past the little Templar church of S. Vito. The great and beautiful villa of Bellosguardo is surely one of the oldest villas about Florence, for it belonged to that good knight Messer Cavalcante Cavalcanti, the father of the poet Guido, the friend of Dante. He was Signore of the castles of Le Stinche of Monte Calvo in Val di Pesa, of Luco, of Ostina in the upper Arno valley and of other places too. His family is said to have come into Italy with Charlemagne. No doubt Guido, to whom Dante dedicated the *Vita Nuovo*, loved the place and often enough up there cursed Corso Donati, the great stanch man down in the city in Borgo degli Albizzi. And then, suddenly an exile, he had to leave all this and returning at last from far away Sarzana came home to die. "Guido Cavalcanti," says Villani,[1] "returned thence sick, whence he died; and he was a great loss, seeing he was a philosopher and a man good at many things, save only this, that he was too sensitive and passionate."

Guido was not the only one of his family to suffer. Masino was beheaded, the palaces of the family were burnt in the city, and when they fled to their hills and harried the *contado* their castles were besieged. Le Stinche was taken and its defenders imprisoned in the new prison the Signoria had built on the site of the Uberti houses in the parish of San Simone, and then the gaol came to be known as Le Stinche, a name it bears to this day. So the years passed, the Cavalcanti returned only to be exiled again; and settling in Naples, in 1447, they sold Bellosguardo to Tommaso, son of Gino Nerii de' Capponi, for 1,500 gold florins.[2]

[1] Villani, *Cronica*, lib. viii., cap. 42.

[2] See Janet Ross, *Florentine Villas* (Dent, 1902), p. 61.



A COUNTRY PROCESSION

Eighty years later the villa was a ruin spoiled, as it is said, in the siege. Then Cosimo I. took it by force and gave it to one of his servants; then one of his favourites bought it, a certain Leonardo Marinozzi. His son in 1583 sold it to Antonio Michelozzi, whose descendants, Mrs. Ross tells me, still own it. It is easy to understand how the place won its name.

From Bellosguardo we return to Via Pisana by a road that turns to the left in the great piazza before coming to S. Vito. Following the road downwards we come to Monticelli, where in the church of S. Pietro is a beautiful crucifix of the school of Giotto and some fine pictures of the sixteenth century. Then taking the tram[1] we follow the road for some two miles to Ponte a Greve. On the height of this great bridge on the left is a little tabernacle of the fourteenth century, graciously painted in fresco, Madonna in the midst with her little Son surrounded by saints. Standing there, before us, we see the great plain on the left bank of Arno between the river and the hills. Always subject to floods, like the plain on the right bank between Rifredi and Signa, it is only in recent years that it has in some sort been rescued from the ravages of the winter rains gathered from the hills by Arno and its tributaries and spread disastrously over the plain. Yet for all the dykes which we shall see and the better drainage of the whole valley, as I write, the papers are full of the *inondazione* in Val d'Arno, and though doubtless things are not so bad as they were even in 1844, when the whole valley lay under water, all this country is still, as it were, in fear of the river which all the summer long, shrunken and wasted, encourages the dreaded malaria and in autumn and

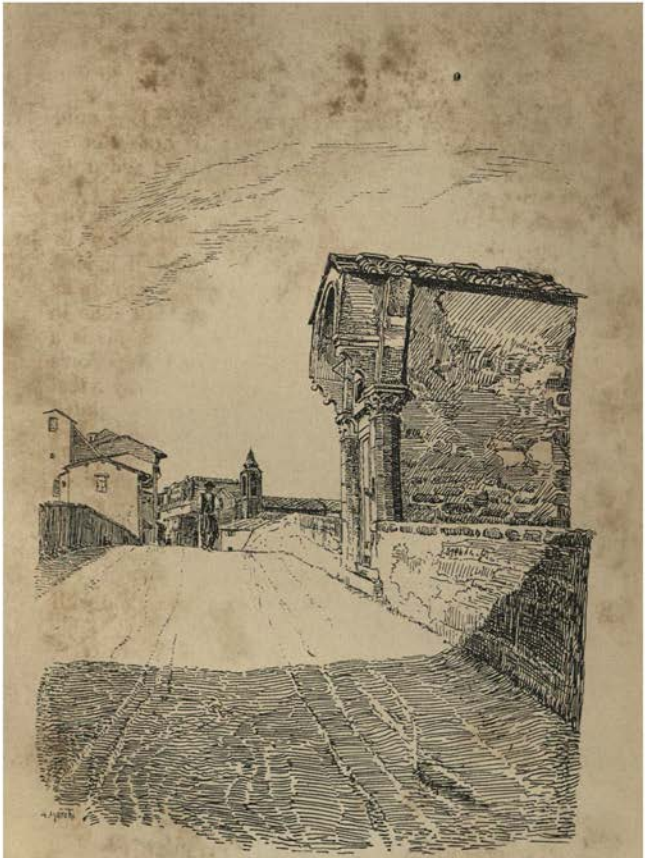
[1] It is better to go by tram for the road is both dusty and noisy. The trams too run every twenty minutes to Ponte a Greve.

winter often turns the broad, smiling valley into a swamp.

It is across this plain, in spring after the long rain, a wilderness of wild flowers, that our way lies. For as soon as you have crossed the bridge you turn sharply down a good road to the right, and following it for some half-mile or so, come into Solicciano, a little village not much more than a huddle of houses, where in the midst stands the Church of S. Pietro. Founded somewhere in the eleventh century, like so many of its sisters hereabout, we hear of it for the first time in a contract of 1082 between the nuns of S. Maria a Montignano, its patrons, and the nuns of S. Appollonia in Florence. Its only claim on our notice to-day is that it contains a very beautiful fresco of Madonna painted by some pupil of Giotto's. Turning to the left just past the church and in about three hundred yards following the road to the left again, then to the right and again to the left till you come to a place where four roads meet, if you take the way to the right here, in about two miles following the road straight on through the vineyards along the ditch of Dogajella, you will come into the village of Badia a Settimo with its great ruined abbey.

Not far away across the vines is the Pieve of S. Giuliano with its gaunt tower. It guards two charming works of the fifteenth century sculptors, Antonio Rossellino and Giuliano da Majano, and two Giottesque pictures rather spoiled by the fogs of the plain.

Badia a Settimo is the most characteristic village of all those scattered over the wide plain on the left bank of Arno. Nearer to the river than to the beautiful southern hills it has suffered more grievously than any other place from the winter floods of Arno, which have almost completely submerged one abbey and to a great extent have destroyed the other which rose



THE PONTE A GREVE

above it. But, even in its dilapidation, the Badia a Settimo is the most beautiful of all those which still hover, as it were, half fearful around that which Florence has become. Little better than a somewhat noisy museum, Florence to-day can find neither pleasure nor delight in these homes of learning and silence. The Badia of Florence has no monks, the Badia a Fiesole is a school, the Certosa di Val d'Ema a national monument, Monte Oliveto a military hospital, and Badia a Settimo it seems has only escaped a like fate because Arno was kinder than man, for in destroying it he has left it all its silence and nearly all its beauty.

Who built this abbey which, half fortress, half church, stands so illusively in the plain beside Arno, among its beautiful ruined towers and broken battlements, remains something of a mystery. Some say that it was the Conti di Borgonuovo, called di Fucecchio, who founded it in 984. They were an ancient and powerful family of Teutonic origin, busy for so long in the *contado* of Florence, especially in the quarter of Oltrarno; while in Fucecchio they held the Castello, and there for the most part was their seat. Villani, however, tells a different tale,[1] speaking of the Marquis Ugo, who, as he says, founded the Badia of Florence in the year 979. "I take it," he says,[2] "this must have been the Marquis of Brandenburg, forasmuch as there is no other marquisate in Germany. His sojourn in Tuscany liked him so well, and especially our city of Florence, that he caused his wife to come thither, and took up his abode in Florence as

[1] *Cf.* my *Florence and Northern Tuscany* (Methuen, 1907), p. 107.

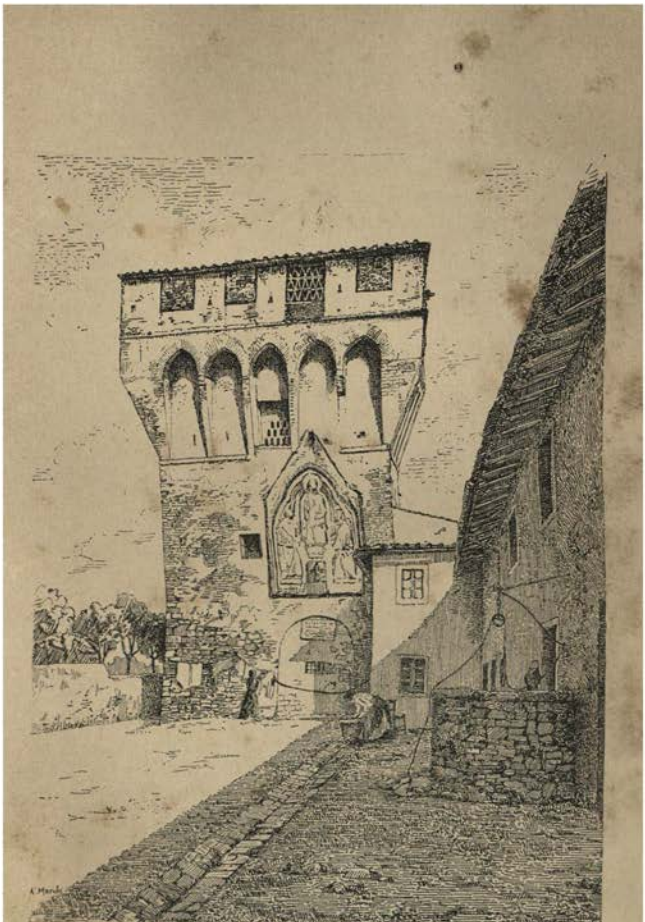
[2] Villani, *Cronica*, bk. iv., 2. The Badia of Florence was certainly founded by Ugo's mother, Countess Willa. *Cf.* my *Florence and Northern Tuscany*, pp. 254-255.

Vicar of Otho, the Emperor. It came to pass, as it pleased God, that when he was riding to the chase in the country of Bonsollazzo, he lost sight in the forest of all his followers, and came out, as he supposed, at a workshop where iron was wont to be wrought. Here he found men, black and deformed, who, in place of iron, seemed to be tormenting men with fire and with hammer, and he asked what this might be; and they answered and said that these were damned souls, and that to similar pains was condemned the soul of the Marquis Ugo by reason of his worldly life, unless he should repent: who in great fear commended himself to the Virgin Mary, and when the vision was ended, he remained so pricked in the spirit, that after his return to Florence he sold all his patrimony in Germany and commanded that seven monasteries should be founded; the first was the Badia of Florence to the honour of S. Maria; the second that of Bonsollazzo where he beheld the vision; the third was founded at Arezzo; the fourth at Poggibonizzi; the fifth at the Verruca of Pisa; the sixth at the city of Castello; the last was the one at Settimo;[1] and all these abbeys he richly endowed, and lived afterwards with his wife in holy life, and had no son, and died in the city of Florence on S. Thomas's Day, in the year of Christ 1006, and was buried with great honour in the Badia of Florence."

It is certain that in 988 Count Adimaro, son of the Marchese Bonifazio of Borgonuovo, gave to the abbey, together with many houses and lands, the Churches of S. Martino alla Palma and S. Donato a Lucardo. During the next three centuries it seems to have increased both in wealth[2] and power, extending

[1] And hence in all probability the name—the seventh abbey which Ugo founded.

[2] For all that concerns the abbey, see Anon., *Cenni Storici intorno alla Badia di Settimo* (Firenze, 1855).



OLD GATE AT BADIA A SETTIMO

its possession into the territory of Sommaia on Monte Morello and in the valleys about it northwards. Then Conte Lotario enlarged it, and in 1004 it came into the possession of the Cluniacense monks. Conte Guglielmo Bulgaro, the son of Conte Lotario, gave them the Church of S. Salvatore in the Apennines with a vast territory between Florence and Bologna.[1] It was the same Conte Guglielmo who invited S. Giovanni Gualberto,[2] founder of the Vallombrosan Order, to reform this monastery also. S. Giovanni seems to have ruled there till his death at Passignano in 1073, and it was with his consent, if not under his orders, that S. Pietro Igneo, on 13th February, 1068, went through the Ordeal by Fire before an enormous crowd of people, which had come out of the city to see the miracle.[3]

It came about on this wise. Simony and Nicolaitism were rife in all Tuscany, and not least it seems in Florence. S. Giovanni was determined to extirpate them. He began with the greatest villain about him, Pietro Mazzabarba, who had "simoniacally" obtained the see of Florence, it appears through the influence of the Emperor. At this time S. Giovanni was Abbot of S. Salvi beyond the Porta alla Croce of Florence, the second monastery of his Order. There one night in 1062 a band of hired roughs stormed the church, and the monks being in choir at the time, some were killed and, as it is said, all wounded, and even the abbey

[1] *Cf.* Repetti, *Dizionario*, under *Abazia a Settimo*, vol. i., p. 27.

[2] For an account of S. Giovanni Gualberto, see my *Florence and Northern Tuscany* (Methuen, 1907), pp. 363-65.

[3] For an account of what follows, see Diego di Franchi's *Historia del Patriarcha S. Giovangualberto* (Firenze, 1640), p. 453, and Brocchi, *Vite de' Santi e Beati Fiorentini* (Firenze, 1752), a most interesting book.

sacked and fired. Those, however, who wished to kill S. Giovanni Gualberto were disappointed, for the great abbot, an old man at the time, had by chance delayed his arrival by a single day. The agitation among the people for the deprivation of the bishop had always been great, but after this outrage it increased daily, till at last the Florentines appealed to S. Giovanni to permit a judgment of God by fire between the bishop and himself. He agreed. And the place chosen for the *Prova* was the piazza in front of the Badia a Settimo, not long since, by the desire of Conte Guglielmo Bulgaro, become a Vallombrosan house. Some five thousand persons went out of Florence that February morning to see what God would do. It is said that it was S. Giovanni himself who chose his champion, Don Pietro Aldobrandino, canonised later as S. Pietro Igneo. Two bonfires were built in front of the abbey, a narrow lane being left between them: it was the road S. Pietro had to walk. After S. Pietro had said Mass, so far as the *Agnus Dei*, four monks came out of the church, one bearing a crucifix, another holy water, another incense, and the fourth candles lighted, to bless the wood which, already piled up, awaited the flame. Then Mass being over, S. Pietro himself came forth, and having put aside his schauble, but wearing still his alb and stole and maniple and bearing a cross between his hands, he prayed aloud to Almighty God that He would show forth His Justice, and so, giving his brethren the kiss of Peace and ever holding on high the cross he bore in his hands, without fear he entered among the flames. When he came to the end of the fiery road he found, so the tale goes, that he had dropped his maniple, so he turned back to fetch it, and came at last out of the fire scatheless. And the people fell upon him to touch if it might be but the hem of his robe. Thus, as they say, simony was killed

in Florence. An inscription still reminds us of the miracle:

Igneus hic Petrus medios pertransit ignes,
Fluminarum victor, sed magis haereseos.

Hoc in loco miraculo S. Joannis Gualberti, quidam fuere confortati haeretici. MLXX.

After Conte Guglielmo, Conte Uguccione became a great benefactor of the abbey, and his wife Cecilia was buried there in 1096.[1] Many Emperors and many Popes gave the abbey their protection, and then here, as elsewhere, Gregory IX., thinking to bridle it, turned out the monks that followed the Rule of S. Benedict and installed in their place the Cistercians, bringing the abbey directly under his authority in 1236. The Cistercians held it for more than five hundred years, till indeed it was suppressed in 1782. They seem to have been welcome from the beginning and soon to have won the respect of the Commune of Florence, which gave into their charge the administration of the taxes, the inspection of the walls of the city and the bridges, and, strange occupation for a Congregation of monks even in those days, the construction of castles and fortified places in the district; later they kept the great seal. They were exempt too from all state taxes, and indeed so great was their power and wealth that on his investiture the abbot

[1] These two inscriptions record the fact:—

Anno MXCVI Dominicae Incarnationis vii. Kal. Mai. Θ. Cilla Comitissa, cujus corpus hic requiescit in pace.

Gasdia dicta fui generoso stemmate ducta,
Atque viri clari morte diu tabida
Gloria, forma, decus, congestio divitiarum,
Nobilitas carnis quam cito morte fugis!
Corpus terra voret, set spiritus ibit ad astra
Erectus meritis ac nati (sic) studiis.
Te nimium posco vel tantum dicere, lector
Junge Deus sanctis, quaeso, tuam famalam,

could afford to pay a thousand gold florins to the Court of Rome.[1]

The older part of the abbey, as we now see it, is a building of this time—the thirteenth century. It was, however, much rebuilt and enlarged later, the walls being added by the republic after the expedition of Sir John Hawkwood in 1371, when the whole *contado* was laid waste. These walls surrounded the abbey completely, the four towers in their circuit dominating the whole plain. The beautiful gate-tower we see to-day is almost all that is left of them. A relief of our Lord and two saints stands over it, and in an inscription under the feet of Christ you may read how in 1236 the abbey passed to the Cistercians: *Anno Domini* MCCXXXVI. *SS. Dmn. N. Gregorius IX. dedit hoc Monasterium de Septimo Ordin. Cisterc. cum esset liberum et exemptum ab omni regio patronatu, quod in plena libertate a dicto Ordine pacifice possidetur.*

There have been in all two churches and a chapel on this spot. The first church was probably engulfed gradually in the swamp when Arno turned year by year the whole plain into a morass. The chapel, now reached from the corridors of the monastery, stood beside the old church, to-day, more than half sunk in the mud, is used as a sort of shed by the *contadini*. The frescoes, traces of which, little more than outlines, may be seen on the beautiful arched roof scarcely six feet above the mud, have been ruined by the floods of Arno, the inundation of 1844 completing the wreck of centuries.

The church we see to-day was built in the thirteenth century at right angles above the original building. It once stood high above the plain and was reached by a long flight of steps which, like the old chapel,

[1] *Cf.* Anon., *La Badia di Settimo* (Firenze, 1855), p. 32, where the quotation is given from Ricca, tom. i., p. 307, *Descriz. ecc.*

have disappeared into the mud. The most beautiful of the buildings which remain to us is the tower, a hundred and eleven feet high, circular half-way to the top and then hexagonal, a work as it is said of Niccolò Pisano, who is credited too with the similar tower of S. Niccolò in Pisa. Within, the church is a little cold and empty, full of loneliness, too big for the handful of peasants who worship there. About the choir is set a frieze of cherubim, alternating with the Lamb holding the banner of Resurrection, by one of the della Robbia school. The most precious thing left here, however, is a lovely tabernacle or ambry in the chapel at the end of the north aisle, a work by Desiderio da Settignano, who has set about the door, as it were on guard, four listening angels. Here, too, above the high altar, is a silver reliquary containing the miraculous ashes of S. Quentin, who, martyred in Paris long and long ago, when his body was brought to Brozzi by the monks preferred Badia a Settimo; therefore he caused this silver casket containing his bones to float across Arno when it was big, and the monks finding it, set it over the high altar, but again it moved by a miracle every morning into this very place, so that at last they left it there, where it stands to this day.

So runs the tale, it is but a legend after all of flooded fields. Certainly from the earliest days the abbey suffered from the floods, and we find the monks perforce almost, learning to be engineers. They built weirs and locks and mills, but far from controlling the inundations, they seem to have made them worse, besides interfering with the navigation—such navigation as Arno here could bear—so that in 1385 the Republic ordered the destruction of their work. Yet it is not so long ago that their ideas, some of them at any rate, were adopted by the authorities, as we may see, if leaving the abbey church by the western doors we

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turn to the right along the road, which leads us through the great iron gates of a *podere*, across a wooden bridge by the house of a *contadino*, and then, as just a footpath, climbs the bank of the great dyke which, turning to the right, we may follow towards Ugnano. It is these grass-grown dykes which now to some extent keep Arno within bounds and save the fields from destruction. Yet in autumn, indeed, after the October rains, I have seen that vast plain little better than a morass, a lake of water in which the trees, the vines still about them, seemed to shiver in misery. In summer the whole valley is a fiery furnace, but in spring or early autumn nothing is more delightful than this world where on one side the river glides by in the trembling shadow of the poplars, and on the other, the green delicious plain stretches away to the beautiful hills. You may follow along these dykes for miles on the soft grass past Ugnano whose ancient church with its pointed campanile soon greets you but a few paces from the river bank, past Mantignano too, not so near but not too far away, whose square church tower rises between the poplars almost as light as they.

S. Maria a Mantignano was once the church of a Benedictine nunnery which we first hear of in a document of the year 1084. Founded as we may suppose not long after the Badia a Settimo, it had much the same patrons but was less happy in its fate, for it was suppressed by Eugenius IV., when he was in Florence in 1440. There is nothing to see in the church, and indeed it is scarcely worth while to leave the pleasant way along the dykes for its sake. For following along that lofty way presently we come to that shady place where Greve runs into Arno. There we turn up the smaller stream and in about a quarter of a mile come to a great wooden bridge, which we cross, and following the road find ourselves in the little village of

Cintoja, where at the cross roads in the midst of the place is set one of the loveliest shrines in Tuscany, a Madonna and Child between two saints, painted in fresco, perhaps by some pupil of Neri di Bicci. And then it might seem to be Neri di Bicci himself who has painted on a gold ground the Coronation of the Virgin behind the high altar in the Church of S. Bartolommeo there. It is one of the delights of the by-ways about Florence to come upon such a thing as this in a village which even Repetti discusses in some twenty lines or so, fully a half of which is devoted to the derivation of its name. Cintoia, Cintoria, Cinturia, Centurie Cesariane he calls it, adding that its name is mentioned in an instrument of the year 724—so long ago as that—*ubi etiam Cintoria nominatur.* The road runs with many turnings, but direct, from Cintoja to Legnaja. Before coming to that little town on the Via Pisana, it is worth while, more than worth while, to turn to the left where four roads meet at right angles about half a mile beyond La Torre, to go to Le Querce, where the little church keeps still some fifteenth century frescoes.

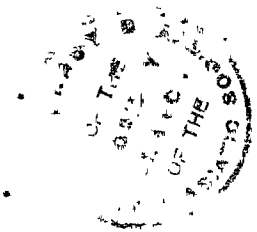
From there it is but another half-mile into Legnaja, now a suburb of the city, but in the fourteenth century, as Repetti proves,[1] a Rocca guarding the Pisan Way. The oldest building in Legnaja to-day, however, is the church of S. Quirico, which dates from the time of Conrad II., in 1038. It was Fra Filippo Lippi's church too, for here he became rector when having run away with Lucrezia Buti from the convent in Prato,[2] Cosimo de' Medici befriended him and made the Pope his friend.

It is, however, in S. Angiolo, a later foundation, that

[1] Repetti, *Dizionario*, vol. ii., p. 675.

[2] See my *Florence and Northern Tuscany* (Methuen, 1907), pp. 389-92.

we most delight to-day—S. Angiolo, called in 1275 S. Salvatore and then S. Michele Arcangiolo. Nothing remains of thirteenth century work in the church, but there is a fine fifteenth century picture over the altar, and in the Canonica a beautiful Annunciation, dated 1420.



VI

BAGNO A RIPOLI, PATERNO, RUBALLA, AND ANTELLA

THE little *borgo* of Bagno a Ripoli lies to the west of Florence on the southern bank of the Arno, some three miles from the city, and through it runs the old road to Arezzo and Rome, Via Aretina Vecchia, which crosses the great hills of S. Donato, the more modern road through Val d'Arno joining it just above Lucina.[1]

Bagno a Ripoli takes its name from a warm spring on the banks of the Arno about which the Romans built a bath, vestiges of which were discovered so long ago as 1687. But now all this district, Pian di Ripoli, is a delicious garden, the most fruitful and perhaps the most beautiful part of the valley of Florence. A tramway to-day along the old Via Aretina brings the village within a few minutes of the city, and it is by this way we shall go, leaving the tram, however, just before we reach the village, at the Pieve di S. Pietro, the mother church, as it were, of all this district, called in 799 Pieve di S. Pietro a Quarto, but by the thirteenth century acquiring the name it goes by to-day, Pieve di S. Pietro a Ripoli.

Among the most ancient and the most important of

[1] See *supra*, p. 41.

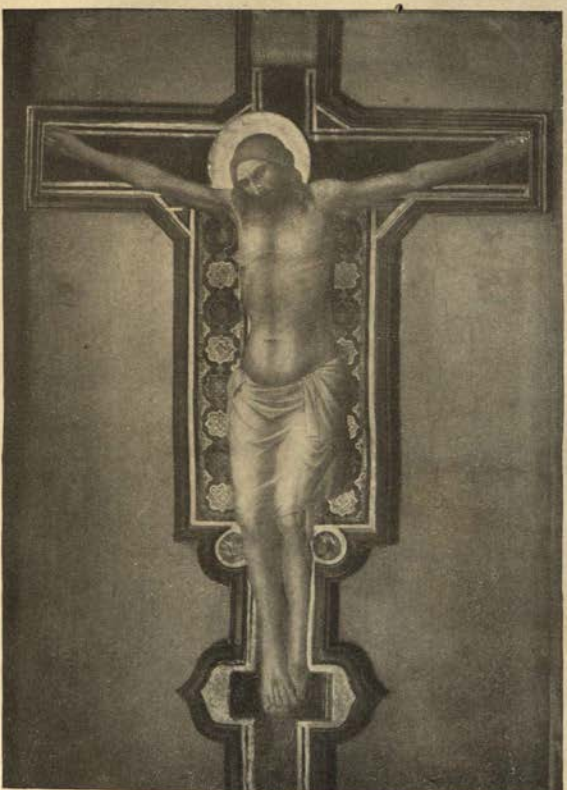
the mother churches[1] about Florence, within its jurisdiction were some fifteen parishes stretching from S. Martino a Monte Pilli to S. Maria a Settignano, so that its rule was not altogether on one side of the Arno. Spoiled though the church is to-day, it yet keeps about it something of its ancient beauty, if only in the simplicity of its façade or that airy fourteenth century portico which stands before it, while its high beautiful tower seems to have come to us almost without hurt from the thirteenth century. Still near the door in a lunette you may see a shadow of its old splendour, Madonna in the midst with our Lord in her arms and on either side S. Peter and S. Paul; a spoiled work of the early cinquecento.

Within all is stucco and whitewash, and indeed the only thing that remains to us of any value there is a beautiful marble ciborium, perhaps by Benedetto da Rovezzano, and certainly of the fifteenth century.

Beside the church is an oratory, *Beati Misericordes Quoniam Ipsi Misericordiam Consequentur*, once belonging to the Compagnia della Croce. Within, is a fine Giottesque Crucifix and a picture of the Crucifixion of the Florentine school of the sixteenth century, not unlike the poorer work of Fra Bartolommeo.

From this lonely church by the side of the ancient way, the road to Rome, it is only a matter of half a mile into the village of Bagno a Ripoli. And there on the very threshold at the corner of the Strada della Nave on the left which leads to the Ferry at Rovezzano, is one of the joys of these Tuscan country places, a shrine beside the way, built at the corner of the old Palazzetto Pretorio, the walls of which are still set with coats of arms. In a tabernacle of the fifteenth century we may see Madonna enthroned with our Lord

[1] I so translate *Pieve*. For an explanation of the meaning of the term, see *supra*, p. 84.



Mannelli

THE CRUCIFIX

By Lorenzo di Niccolò, in the Church of S. Giorgio a Ruballa

in her lap, and beside her S. Martino and S. Biagio. In the roof is the half figure of God the Father, and without, the Annunciation, and on either side Christ Crucified and S. Antony, abbot. No masterpiece, I think, in any church in Christendom touches me so nearly as these little wayside shrines that, like their sisters the flowers, are scattered along the Tuscan roads, to remind us, as the sky continually does, in Italy of the friendship of God and man, their love for one another, in a world which the one made that the other might enjoy it

It is upon another of these tabernacles that you come as, following still Via Aretina uphill, you enter Meoste. The houses, it is true, have almost smothered it, but it still keeps its brightness in the sunshine for us who pass by, where Madonna enthroned with her Son among the saints and angels seems to bless us and to cheer us on our way. Who can have been the painter of these beautiful but fading things, fading now how surely before our indifference and the dust and hurry of our automobiles? Perhaps it was Niccolò di Piero Gerini, he who painted the scenes of the Passion in the sacristy of Santa Croce, or perhaps it was a lesser man, nameless now, but whom, since it is become the fashion to find out the authors of all beautiful things and to give them names, we may well call, whatever style he adopts, our friend, that Amico del Viaggiatore who has passed at some time, it seems, along all these ancient roads, and even through the by-ways, scattering his blossoms.

The road climbs gently out of Meoste into La Croce, a mere group of houses among the vineyards that stretch over hillside and valley to Florence far away. And indeed by this road perhaps, rather than by any other, the sweetness and sincerity of this Tuscan landscape reveal themselves to us, in the delicate strength

of the lines of the hills there above Settignano, the beauty of the cypresses over the olive gardens, the sanity and joy of the earth. In such a world one comes to think little of the work of the painters hidden in the churches; one grudges the time spent out of the sun, and yet . . .

In La Croce certainly there is little to see; in the oratory there, only an outline of a Crucifixion on the damp wall. It is in the olive gardens among the corn, on the hillside among the cypresses, in the little houses of the *contadini* dotted about the valleys, in the broken Castelli that crown the heights, that we shall find our joy, rather than in the darkness of that spoiled church.

And of all these villages so full of life and delight, Paterno is, I think, the most charming and the most friendly. Standing as it does on the lower slope of Monte Pilli, that ever since we left Bagno a Ripoli has towered over us, it is little more than a huddle of houses beside the white road to Rome, but on entering it some new joy—or is it just fancy—seems to come into the sunlight, where at a winding of the road under the blue sky the wind turns all the olives to silver. Just there on a road that climbs the hill to the left, through the vineyards in country quietness, the Church of S. Stefano waits in the sunlight as though for the sound of her own mid-day bells. Restored and for the most part spoiled as she is, that quietness lingers with her still, and so it is without surprise you accept the simple thing she has to offer you, just a picture of Madonna, praying beside her little Son, while S. Joseph sits by, thinking; the work, they tell you, of a Friar Paolino da Pistoja, a pupil of Fra Bartolommeo, who it seems kept the simplicity of which Michelangelo robbed his master.

So we return to the highway, and following it, pres-

Manelli

MADONNA WITH SAINTS AND ANGELS

From the picture by Bernardo Daddi in the Church of S. Giorgio a Ruballa

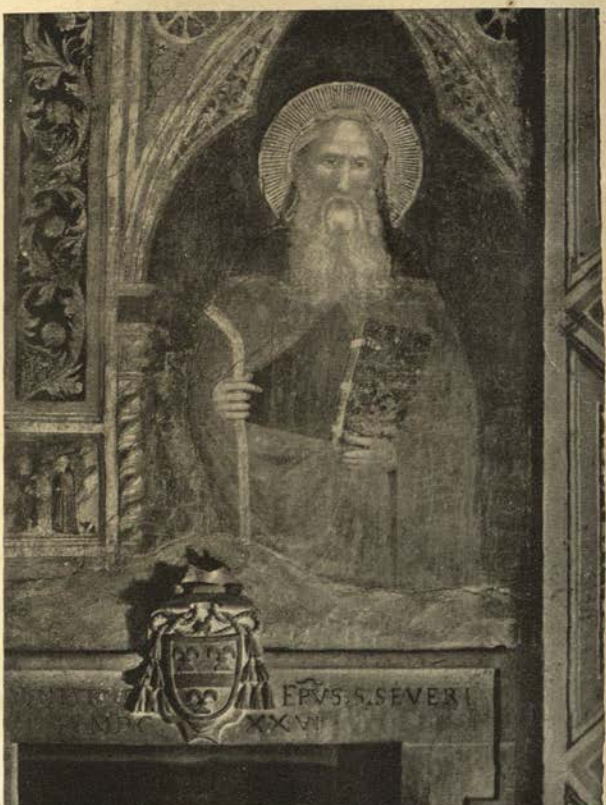
ently, climbing still, we come to Fonte del Pidocchio, where the road divides, the way to the left being the older steep way to Arezzo and Rome, which the new road to the right joins again at Le Quattrovie under San Donato. Following the new road, in about a mile we come to a great old villa close beside the road, that indeed might almost house an army, called Le Corte.

In the beginning of the fifteenth century, Signor Carocci tells us, it belonged as it had done for centuries to the Peruzzi family, who at the end of the sixteenth century sold it to Antonio di Filippo Magalotti. Later it passed through many hands, till in 1801 the Duchessa Laura Salviati left it to the Spedale di S. Giovanni di Dio in Florence. Its interest for us however might seem to be that while so many of the ancient villas about Florence have been destroyed or rebuilt, the Florentine being indeed altogether a lover of the city, Le Corte keeps still its ancient form within and without, and is indeed an example hard to beat of the mediæval villa, half palace, half fortress, a great square building of ruddy stone, cool in summer and possibly warm in winter too, capable at any rate of resisting a siege or of hiding a troop of armed men.

Le Corte stands within the parish of S. Quirico a Ruballa. Following the highway past it, not descending to the right but keeping straight on, just where the village begins, a road turns uphill to the left once more, through the olive gardens, to the parish church of San Quirico. Small though it is and on a country way on the verge of the woods, S. Quirico is one of the most ancient churches of Monte Pilli. Its patrons were the Peruzzi, and in 1214 there was founded beside it a *spedale* for pilgrims which took the title of Bigallo. Later this Ospedale was converted into a convent of nuns; and as Repetti tells us, in that place was a perennial spring of clear water which the Signoria of

Florence on the 19th November, 1294, spent seventy florins to preserve.

It was a hot day in June when I came to S. Quirico. The midday gun had sounded half an hour before; all the world was sleeping. Half afraid that I should disturb a siesta, I knocked at the door of the canonica and presently the priest himself appeared, a severe yet kindly man who little by little beginning to smile was content at last to show me what treasures he had. One of them at least I shall never forget. For after uncovering, not without much trouble and many dim mutterings, the Madonna of the place, a picture perhaps by Domenico Puligo, where Mary holds Christ in her arms who has just grown weary of playing with S. Giovannino, he led me behind the high altar where there was hidden one of the most beautiful of those Giottesque Crucifixes which I have so loved. How weary one grows of all the realistic pictures in the world; sometimes they press upon one in the galleries where they are prisoners like an immense crowd of outraged people who can never die, whom we have imprisoned to stare at and criticise at our leisure. It is only of those pictures, half pattern, half the impassioned gesture of a dream, of which we never grow tired or weary wherever they be, and then it is most often alone in some forgotten place like this church at Ruballa that we find them. And for what have we forgotten them: for the discontented tireless genius of the world. What sort of man is he who could hope to live in the presence even of so lovely a thing as Mona Lisa, or who could bear to stay always near the Assunta of Titian? These and such as these are too subtle or too strong for us, we look at them as we look at the sun and pass into the shadow. But those pictures of the Annunciation, or the Nativity of our Lord, or the Coronation of Madonna, those early Crucifixes



Alinari

ST. ANTONIO ABATE

From the fresco by Spinello Aretino in the Oratorio di S. Caterina, near Antella

too, full of an exquisite pattern of line and colour, mere multi-coloured shadows on the wall, we can bear all day long, they seem to fall in with one's mood, to be content to minister to us, and will never thrust themselves upon us or compel us to suffer some strong and profound emotion that to know for a moment is pleasure, but torture to endure for ever. Who indeed could bear to sleep beneath a picture of the Crucifixion by any later painter; but under such a thing as this Cross in S. Quirico one might be content, not to sleep only, but to die; it is just a beautiful symbol, a shadow on the white wall at sunrise and sunset, of the thought that is in our hearts. And then if you want reality, look you, there are the hills and the gardens: and if indeed you would see Madonna, as perhaps she was, why, there she sits—is it not so?—under the cypresses in the cool of the day not far from the house, singing to her little son. When will Art again as in Duccio's day free itself from the convention of reality, and return to the convention of beauty?

So I thought on my way downhill, back to the highway. Then, following it, with the great hill and Castello of Montisoni ever before me, in something under half a mile I came to Ruballa itself and the Church of S. Giorgio at the end of a lane that breaks there into a sunny piazza on the verge of the hillside covered with olives. And since I have praised so much the Crucifix of S. Quirico, what can I say of the two most precious treasures of S. Giorgio? Hidden away in this tiny country church, Madonna herself—our most beautiful thought of her—seems to hover over the altar between the slim white candles, standing there like lilies about to burst into blossom. It is a work of Agnolo Gaddi, and as it seems to me, the most beautiful of all the pictures that yet remain in the churches about Florence. In the midst is Madonna with our

Lord in her arms and round about her are four angels, with S. Matthew kneeling before her, and beside him an angel, while beneath in a friar's dress kneels the donor. Who would not give for a picture like this all the work, yes, even the portraits, of such a man as Andrea del Sarto?

Nor is this the only treasure in the church, for over the altar stands another of those Giottesque Crucifixes, more beautiful and more perfect than the masterpiece of S. Quirico. Ah! truly to come out of the sun into the coolness of a village church and to find there such things as these is one of the joys of the traveller in Tuscany. That those in authority should ever have been so foolish as to steal them away from such a place as this and to hang them in a museum where they are not only ridiculously out of place, but even absurd, is a stupidity so astonishing as to be inexplicable.

On coming out of the church you follow the road downwards, turning first to the right and then to the left, making for the great towered Villa La Torre, where the son of Robert Browning has made his home. It is like an English country house to-day, save for its splendid tower, but long and long ago it was a fortress of the Peruzzi, the most important, Signor Carocci tells us, of all those castles, palaces and villas which that great family possessed on the hills of Ruballa, Baroncelli and Antella, and for this reason it was not sold but guarded jealously till our own days, Ubaldino Peruzzi, that great Florentine who helped to prepare the way for Modern Italy, coming there to die. Signor Cavaliere Roberto Browning bought the place in 1901.

So, following where the road leads, you wind down hill through the laughing olives to Antella, that busy place in the midst of which is the Church of S. Maria Incinula, which has given its name, though changed,

Alinari

ST. CATHERINE OF ALEXANDRIA

From the fresco by Spinello Aretino in the Oratorio di S. Caterina, near Antella

to the village. Nothing of much interest remains there to-day—a beautiful and delicate ciborium of the fifteenth century above the font, the font itself a late work of the sixteenth century—that is all.

But if returning a little on your way you take the path under a villa through the olive gardens, which leaves the village street (on the left as you turn back) just opposite the road by which you have come from La Torre, you may go very pleasantly over the hills to Bagno a Ripoli, passing one treasure at least by the roadside, and that is among the finest things in Tuscany.

Leaving then the village street by this path on the left,[1] you wind among the olives and peach-trees and cypresses really through the *poderi*, till you spy a great villa on the hill-top not far away to the right, when you make towards it, Rospigliosi they call it, and passing behind it, when the road turns to the right, follow it into the valley of Rimezzano.

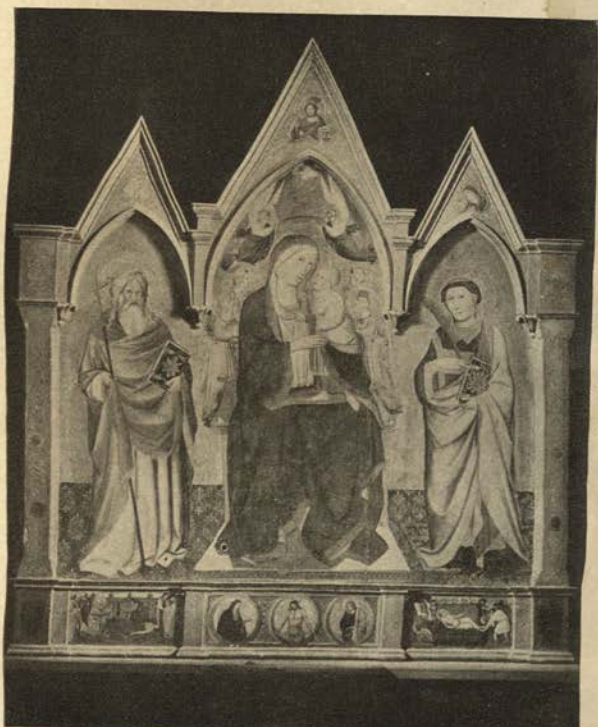
Villa Rospigliosi, Poggio a Grilli, as it used to be called, belonged in the fifteenth century to Giovanni d'Ottobuono, Archbishop of Amalfi, but it is not for his sake we have come this way, but because at the foot of the hill (the first building you come to, at the second turn of the road after leaving the villa) there is a chapel, certainly as big as many a parish church, which Spinello Aretino has painted in fresco both within and without, while over the altar still stands a marvellously lovely triptych, an almost perfectly preserved work by Agnolo Gaddi.

Utterly neglected and forsaken, this chapel was built long and long ago in the midst of their vast estate by the great house of Alberti, who employed

[1] If you are in any doubt, ask the sacristan of S. Maria all' Antella to put you on the way to the Cappella di S. Caterina.

to paint there the best masters of that age. When I saw the place in the autumn of 1907 it was used as a storehouse for new *fiaschi*, and the damp had already spoiled in part the lower frescoes. Yet Spinello of Arezzo was by no means a mere imitator of Giotto, A son, it might seem, of the great Ghibelline house which had taken refuge in Arezzo in 1308, about 1340, when Arezzo was sacked, he took refuge in Florence, painting there many frescoes and altar-pieces, among which perhaps the work which shows his style to best advantage is the series in fresco of the life of St. Benedict at S. Miniato. Far more splendid than these well-known and fading masterpieces, however, is his work here in this unknown chapel which Crowe and Cavalcaselle seem never to have found, but which has escaped not the immense research of Signor Venturi. Here in nine great and splendid frescoes Spinello tells the story of the life and death of S. Catherine of Alexandria. Over the altar is the marvellously well-preserved triptych of Agnolo Gaddi, of Madonna with our Lord in her arms between two saints; and under, in the *gradino*, on either side of the Pietà, the martyrdoms of S. Lorenzo and another saint; and above, in the cusps, Christ in the midst, and on one side the Angel of Annunciation, and on the other Madonnina.

Spinello Aretino, the author of those magnificent frescoes, was the son of Luca Spinelli, who "did nothing for his education, allowing him only to learn the rudiments"; nevertheless he quickly became proficient, so that after a short instruction under Jacopo da Casentino, at the age of twenty, he was already a better painter than his master. And this mastery he won by studying the work of Giotto himself. So he came to be more truly the pupil of Giotto than those who had had him for master, and at the close of the fourteenth century he was undoubtedly the greatest



Alinari

ALTAR-PIECE

By Agnolo Gaddi, in the Oratorio di S. Caterina near Antella

painter then living. His pictures, fragments of his altar-pieces, are scattered in every gallery in Europe, and, judged by them, lovely though they be, he might seem a lesser painter than he is. It is by his frescoes we must judge him, and with his work in Arezzo, in Pisa, and at S. Miniato al Monte to choose from, it is, I think, here in this wayside chapel that to-day he is seen at his best. For by some miracle these frescoes have been preserved, while the rest have faded on the walls till they are but ghosts, shadows of themselves, which are passing away how surely under our eyes. And this being so, it might seem incumbent upon the Government to provide for the proper care of things at once so rare and so precious. At present, for some reason or other, not only is the chapel used as a *tinaja*, but dogs and turkeys and chickens are allowed to herd there, so that what was once a church is little better than a barn. Moreover, something should be done at once to save Spinello's work from the damp which will ere long utterly destroy it. And then proper attention to this most precious and lovely shrine, forgotten so unaccountably, would almost certainly lead to the discovery of other frescoes under the whitewash, at least behind the high altar, where even the passer-by can discern the shadowed outlines of a great Madonna. Such a loveliness as this chapel is not so common even in Tuscany that one can afford to neglect it.

The road turns sharply to the right beside the chapel, dividing almost immediately into two branches, of which we choose that to the right. We follow it uphill where it winds past Villa Ronzi in a half circle to the left, and thence downhill to the right for about a mile till it passes under the beautiful hill of Baroncelli into the Via Vecchia Aretina at Bagno a Ripoli, whence we take tram for Florence.

VII

SIGNA, LASTRA A SIGNA, GANGALANDI, MALMANTILE, AND MONTELUPO

SIGNA lies at the western extremity of the plain of Florence, on the hillside above the Arno, where the river begins to force its way through the narrow pass of the Gonfolina, after passing which, it flows across the plain of Empoli to Pisa and the sea. Starting early from Florence,[1] a delightful day may be spent in exploring not Signa only with her sisters Ponte a Signa and Gangalandi, but the hill country behind them too, those hills which form, as it were, the natural western boundary of the Florentine territory.

Signa to-day is a little town that lies on the right bank of the Arno under the old Castello, joined by the famous bridge to the smaller town of Ponte a Signa on the Via Pisana, which joins Gangalandi, or, as it is now called, Lastra a Signa. Of these three places, the oldest is certainly the Castel di Signa, which crowns the hill on the northern side of the river. The origin of the name is uncertain, but Signa itself is very old,

[1] There is a train from the Stazione Centrale at 9.30 A.M. which runs to Signa in a quarter of an hour, and another at midday; leaving Florence by either of these trains, one has plenty of time to see Signa and Gangalandi, and to walk to Montelupo across the hills by Malmantile, returning from Montelupo at 5.16 P.M., and reaching Florence at 5.52 P.M. If the earlier train be taken, one may well picnic at Malmantile.

and whether you consider its position there at the meeting of two rivers, the Arno and the Bisenzio, one of them the greatest in Tuscany, or whether you only remind yourself that here before the twelfth century, as later too, was the one bridge that crossed the river between the city of Florence and the city of Pisa, it is easy to understand that Signa must always have been a place of some importance. In the summer, too, the Arno ceased to be navigable above Signa, and thus the place grew to be a sort of port or market for all the merchandise that passed between the two cities. Indeed, from the earliest times, Signa was famous, not only as a port, but as herself the workshop, as it were, where the *bianchi steli di paglia*, that pale Tuscan straw, were twisted or plaited, and made into hats, so that the Proposto Lastro, in his *Cappello di Paglia*, called the industry of the place the *onor del Tosco regno*, and indeed she was the most populous Comunità in all the Grand Duchy. The most ancient records concerning her and her sisters, Ponte a Signa and Gangalandi, show her as part of the feudal dominion of the Conti Cadolinghi, those Conti Borgonuovo who, as we have seen, protected the Badia a Settimo, and who lived for the most part at Fucecchio, ruling thence in some sort a vast territory, which included all this part of Val d'Arno, even to the gates of Florence. To command the pass of the Gonfolina, they built and furnished two fortresses, one of which was on Monte Orlando, and the other on Monte Cascioli, a hill which rises, to-day crowned by a villa, just westward of Castel Pulci. In 1107, the Republic of Florence took and utterly destroyed Monte Orlando, and six years after, in spite of a most vigorous defence, it threw down the Rocca of Monte Cascioli also.[1] Thus the whole of this district

[1] *Cf.* G. Carocci, *Comune di Lastra a Signa* (Firenze, 1895), p. 23.

came into the power of Florence. In order to hold it, the Republic built two strong Castelli: one at Lastra a Gangalandi, close to an older and unimportant fortress called till then Castelvecchio, a little more than half a mile to the north of the modern Lastra a Signa; the other the Castello di Malmantile on the summit of the hills that commanded not only the Via Pisana, but in some sort too the pass of Gonfolina.

For more than two hundred years after Signa thus came into the power of Florence, her story is concerned for the most part with merchandise and the prevention of floods, and the making and keeping of roads. The monks of the Badia a Settimo had certain rights on the left bank of the river, and they seem to have built sluices and locks there, which, instead of preventing floods, seem to have caused them. After the disaster of 1333, when the whole plain was under water, by order of the Signoria, they were destroyed.

A few years before that, however, Signa had on the 30th September, 1325, become the camp of Castruccio Castracani, who took the Castello, and held the hills round about, ready to descend on Florence. On the 25th of the following February, according to Villani,[1] he burned Signa, and cutting the bridge near the Arno, left that part of the country, which he had overrun and burned up to the gates of Florence. Villani goes on to say[2] that "in the same year 1326, on the fourteenth day of September, the Florentines decided to rebuild and refortify both Signa and Gangalandi; and so they did. And they made a wall about Signa with towers both strong and high, according immunity and favour to those *terrazzani* who should build houses there." As for Gangalandi, it seems to have been at this time

[1] Villani, *Cronica*, lib. ix., cap. 317, 338.
[2] *Ibid.*, lib. x., cap. 5.

that it became Lastra a Signa, for Repetti[1] tells us that the Florentines rebuilt it nearer to the *Pieve di Signa*, bringing it nearer, that is to say, to the Arno at the head of the great bridge.

To-day the Castel di Signa consists of a few broken towers and an old wall with two battlemented gates that crown the hill above the modern town. These are the remains of the fortifications built by Florence in 1326. They were put to the proof some seventy years later, for while the Signoria was deliberating whether Florence should make war on Gian Galeazzo of Milan, some of his men-at-arms who were in Siena under Conte Alberigo fell suddenly upon the *contado* even to Signa, as Ammirato tells us,[2] and having spoiled Lastra, they attacked Signa, without success, as it seems, for after two days they went away elsewhere.

In 1380, the monks of Badia a Settimo, whose rights on the Arno had already been curtailed by the Signoria, also lost possession of the Porto di Signa,[3] which they had held since the great plague of 1348. Indeed, the *dazio* of the port was worth a considerable sum of money, and the Republic seems to have called them to account for it. Scarcely anything more has come down to us of the story of this little castello at the head of the pass that led to Pisa. Its great days were over when all that part of Val d'Arno, at the final defeat of Pisa in 1406, came into the hands of Florence.

And to-day there is little or nothing to see there; her old church has been restored out of recognition; if she once possessed works of art, she has lost or sold them, and indeed that steep hill would be scarcely worth the climb if it were not for that beautiful loggia with its old columns in the great Piazza, and the ruins

[1] Repetti, *op. cit.*, vol. v., p. 402.
[2] Ammirato, *Storia Florentina*, lib. xvi.
[3] This was some two miles down the river.

on the hill-top. And yet we must not forget Beata Giovanna, that little shepherdess who became a nun. For her sake, even yet, every year, on the Monday in Easter week, children ride on asses up the wide nave of S. Maria to the high altar, making an offering of oil.

Whether Beata Giovanna was born in the Castello of Signa or not is uncertain; at any rate she lived there, and thus she is rightly called La Beata di Signa. "The most trustworthy notice of the life and deeds of this glorious heroine of Paradise," says Brocchi, "is found in an ancient manuscript that is conserved in the Pieve of Signa, where her holy body rests in a chapel dedicated to her. The manuscript was written at the end of the fourteenth century, that is to say some eighty years after her death, which happened as seems certain in 1307. Certain lives written later tell us that she belonged to the Franciscan Order, or the Augustinian or the Carmelite or the Vallombrosan, but indeed she was of none of them, but a Secular Hermit—*una secolare Romita.*" She was born about 1266, and her parents were just country-folk, labourers who possessed a few sheep which presently Vanna was set to keep on the hills about S. Romolo a Signa towards Malmantile; and indeed as the people say under an oak there in the properties of the Signori Altoviti she and her sheep took shelter in time of rain. While she was still a child God was pleased to show Himself in her, so that one day of flood when Arno was raging she crossed dry-shod when not even a boat dare put out from land, spreading her mantle on the waters and crossing freely as in the safest ship to the other bank. And on this miracle Andrea Stefani made a *lauda* which I shall give at last.

In other prodigies too our Lord manifested her sanctity; so that when with other shepherds she was

feeding her sheep, being overtaken by a tempest of hail and rain, she called them swiftly to her and making the sign of the cross over them and their beasts saved them all, for not one perished, nor were they so much as wetted in all that tempest. Perhaps she took refuge with them under the oak whose branches were as it is said 144 *braccia* round about and 22 *braccia* high. Certainly she loved it well, so that when the Altoviti would cut it down she wept and would not be comforted, saying it was blessed. Yet he who was about this business in spite of her tears had no shame. "Blessed or not," said he, "I will cut it down." But as he lifted the axe, he fell to the ground not without hurt.

And having come to the age of thirteen years, she desired above all things to be loved of God and to serve Him as she might, so she sought out a little cave on the hillside above Signa and there she hid herself: there too in later years they built her oratory, as you may see not far from the bridge where the hills rise towards the Castello. There she prayed and watched and mortified her body for the greater glory of God.

About this time as it happened a woman of the *contorni* of Signa had taken a child to suckle it, and although she certainly used all diligence as it seems, the child would not thrive but came to die. She was in despair, not so much for the loss of the child as she said, but that she must render count of it to its parents, who were most jealous of it. At last seeing no remedy, she carried herself and the dead child to their house. And as she went crying and bemoaning she passed the cave of Beata Vanna, who hearing her weeping called her and asked why she wept so bitterly. Then she showed her the dead boy and said no more. And Vanna, greatly moved, taking the little one in her

arms, *spúsiciens in coelum, ingemuit spiritu,* gave it life and returned it to the nurse, who filled with joy returned happily to her house, magnifying God who by means of Beata Vanna had deigned to work so great a miracle.

There was Madonna Ciava too, the wife of Donico da Signa, in whose property the cave of Beata Vanna was. One morning she baked a cake and taking a portion of it carried it for charity to Beata, then not long after when her husband returned she went to take that which remained to him, but to her great surprise found the cake whole as though she had cut none of it. Thinking maybe after all she had not taken any to Vanna she spoke to her of it, who begged her not to speak to any of this thing; but it got abroad, and ever the more grew among the people a veneration for the Beata. And other things more wonderful still befell, such as that which happened to the little son of Madonna Saffetta who was healed of a gangrene in his foot, or to the little Lapo, six years old, son of Madonna Ricca, whom she healed with the words, "Go in Peace, and the Lord be with thee". And there were yet others, for her pity was ever with children.

How long she lived in her hermitage is uncertain, but she seems to have stayed there for twenty-five years, that is to say during her whole life since her fourteenth year. She died of plague on the 9th November, 1307.

In 1706 it seems that the captains of the Compagnia dell' Insigna Oratoria di Or S. Michele in Florence sent her a certain amount of money for charity, and this would prove that she was not of any Order, for the Friars especially were at war with that company.[1]

[1] See Villani, *Cronica*, lib. vii., cap. 155.

In her last illness a certain Mona Nuta had nursed and assisted her, and a little after, this good soul being ill herself, Beata appeared to her one night when she could not sleep and asked her if she recognised her. "No," replied the poor woman. "I am Giovanna. Thou faithfully servedst me in my infirmity, lo, here I am come to do the like for thee. Show me what ails thee." Nuta showed a pestiferous carbuncle, and Beata touched it with her holy hands and restored her in an instant to perfect sanity. And truly, since she died of the pest, it was against that she was commonly invoked.

When she died all the bells of Signa and of the country places round about rang joyfully of themselves, without human aid, giving signs of her happy passage to Paradise. After her death the Priore of S. Martino a Gangalandi claimed her body, declaring that she was probably born in his parish where truly some of her childhood was spent; yet for the most part she had lived in Signa and certainly she died there. However, the Ordinary of Florence favoured the claim of the Priore of S. Martino. He with his people then came joyfully to take this holy body, having ordered for this purpose a procession. The Lord God, however, who did not wish those of Gangalandi to possess so great a treasure, but rather that the Beata should lie in Signa, manifested His will by a miracle. For scarcely had the procession with the litter reached the midst of the bridge (where the jurisdiction of the curate of Gangalandi began) when all came to a stand, nor, try how they would, could they move forward a single step. So they returned more sad than they had come out. Not yet satisfied, however, one of them cut off in his indiscreet devotion an arm from the holy body, but when he came to the midst of the bridge he was suddenly blind; and the

arm even to-day may be seen in the Pieve of Signa in a crystal vase ornamented with jewels and rings and exposed every year to public veneration on the Monday in Easter week.

Thus the festa of Beata Vanna came to be celebrated every year on the 9th November, the day of her death, and on the Monday in the week of Easter. And this is the song Fra Andrea Stefani made in her honour:—

Ave Virgo Gloriosa,
O Giovanna a Dio benigna,
Che del bel Castel di Signa
Fusti eletta Virgo e sposa.
Ave Virgo Gloriosa.

Tu beata essendo in terra
Colla tua santa orazione
Gli animali, e le persone
Già salvasti dalla guerra,
Or ch' il Ciel tua alma serra
Per noi prega graziosa.
Ave Virgo Gloriosa.

Tu il fanciullo suscitasti
Alla Balia, che affogato
Se l' avea trovato allato,
Nella braccia lo pigliasti;
Come pel bambin pregasti,
Prega Dio, che ci dia posa.
Ave Virgo Gloriosa.

. . . . . .

Tu facesti la stiacciata
Ritornare intera, e sana
A cui un pezzo con sua mana
La Padrona aveva data;
Poichè sei nel Ciel beata,
Pasci noi o preziosa.
Ave Virgo Gloriosa.

. . . . . .

Tu passasti, essendo grosso
Il fium' Arno in sul Mantello
Per virtù del puro Agnello,

Tieni a noi tua mano addosso,
Se pregar di ciò ti posso
Fa nostr' alma gloriosa.
Ave Virgo Gloriosa.

Tu facesti ancor sonare
Le campane tutte a morto.
Gangalandi, Signa, e il Porto
In facesti stupefare,
Non vedendo allor toccare
Le lor funi, o altra cosa.
Ave Virgo Gloriosa.

It was, I think, in the fourteenth century that the Contrada of Signa was divided into three Communes, namely, that of Signa, that of Lastra, and that of Gangalandi. To reach these two latter, you must cross the Arno by the great bridge, which, as we have seen, Castruccio destroyed.

It was, as Puccinelli tells us, in his *Memorie Storiche di Pescia*,[1] S. Alluccio, an *ospitaliere pesciatino*, who, about 1120, obtained leave from the Bishop of Florence to build for the benefit of the *poveri viandati*—poor wanderers surely—indeed, our very selves—a bridge over the Arno within the confines of the diocese of Florence below the city. In 1252 the Cistercians of Badia a Settimo on the 11th of August obtained permission to build on the left bank of the Arno in the place then called the *Mercatale di Signa*, a *pescaja di guinchetto*—a sluice made of rushes—even to the half of the river, for the sake of some mills that the Badia possessed thereabout under Gangalandi. The same document that tells us this, speaks of the bridge which already stood there. Almost certainly of wood, it was already ruined in 1278, when the baptismal font was placed in S. Martino a Gangalandi, because the way across the river was interrupted. A new

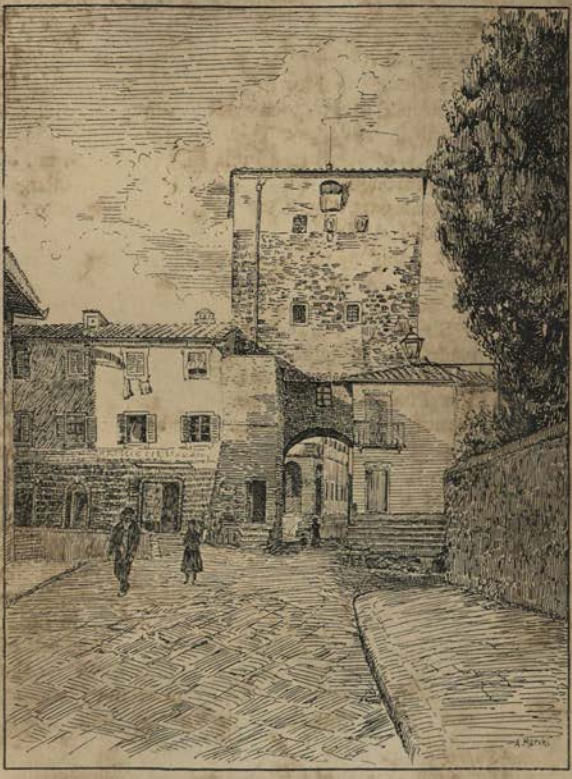
[1] *Cf.* Repetti, *op. cit.*, vol. iv., p. 524.

bridge was built in 1287, and it was this which Castruccio destroyed on the 28th February, 1326. When the Florentines rebuilt the Castel di Signa, they also rebuilt the bridge with a tower. This was probably cut and ruined by Sir John Hawkwood when in 1364 he drove the Florentines down Val di Nievole, and encamped at Peretola. However that may be, it was rebuilt in 1405, and again in 1479, because the little arches of the bridge built in 1405 would not let the boats through. It is across this bridge, enlarged and in great part rebuilt in 1836, that we go into the Castello of Lastra.

Lastra a Signa, or, as it was called in old times, Gangalandi, was at first a simple *borgo*, as we have seen;[1] but after the Pisans, with the White Company under Sir John Hawkwood in 1264[2] had destroyed the place, the Florentine Republic in 1380 rebuilt it, and walled it in with towers and ditches too, to defend the Via Pisana. To-day you may see the splendid and beautiful remains of these walls and fortifications, which, as it is said, Filippo Brunelleschi built for the Republic, if, passing through the little town of Ponte a Signa at the bridge head, you turn to the left into Lastra, and, walking round the *castello* under the old walls, come out at last before the great Porta Fiorentina, great enough for a city. Entering the Castello by this gate, you pass in Corso Vittorio Emanuele the Oratorio di S. Maria della Misericordia, rebuilt in 1404; but from that time, only the door is left, all the rest of the building having been quite modernised. Over the high altar, however, is a fine picture of the Madonna with our Lord, of the thirteenth century. In the Via

[1] *Supra*, p. 118.

[2] For a full account of this affair, and the whole campaign, with an account of the White Company of Englishmen and its leader, see my *Florence and Northern Tuscany*, p. 98 *et seq.*



LASTRA A SIGNA

della Pretura stands the Loggia di S. Antonio, a beautiful building of the fifteenth century, and over the door of an oratory there in a lunette is a fresco, a fifteenth century work by some pupil of Bicci di Lorenzo perhaps, representing Madonna with Bambino Gesù between two angels. There is little else of any interest within the castello; but if, returning a little on your way, towards Ponte a Signa, you take the road to your left under a great ilex that covers all the road, you will come to the Church of S. Martino a Gangalandi, that, beyond everything else in this neighbourhood, is worth a visit.

Gangalandi, to-day just a delicious village, was from very ancient times the stronghold of the counts of that name, who, as Repetti thinks, were viscounts of the Cadolinghi, or at least of that company that called themselves *Cattani* in Lombardy, a thousand of whom were ennobled by the great Marchese Ugo, among them certainly the Gangalandi.[1] That the Counts of Borgonuovo dominated this part of Tuscany we have already seen, and when in 1107 Conte Ugo, the last of the Cadolinghi, was broken by the Commune, and his Castello of Monte Orlando destroyed, the Gangalandi seem to have been already dragged into the city, where we find them in Oltrarno as early as 1040, according to Villani, who speaks of them later as Ghibellines.[2]

The Church of S. Martino a Gangalandi is not much less ancient than the counts. It was originally within the Pieve of S. Maria a Signa, but, as I have said, in 1278, after the destruction of the bridge across Arno, it was permitted to possess a baptistery, thus winning a certain independence, though it is still within the same *piviere*. The most ancient document we possess, how-

[1] Villani, *Cronica*, lib. iv., cap. 2 and 13.
[2] *Ibid.*, lib. v., cap. 39.

ever, concerning S. Martino is of the year 1108. It seems that in that year a certain Bernardo di Adimaro, and other *magnati*, having for a considerable time dissipated the wealth of the parishes of S. Martino and S. Michele, another church at Gangalandi, "for the good of their souls," thought to restore what they had taken. By the counsel of Ranieri, Bishop of Florence, and of Peter, Archdeacon of the Duomo, it was decided to unite the administration of the two churches under a Priore, so that a canonica was built, with a cloister, *presso la ripa del castel di Gangalandi*. The church of S. Michele seems to have been a *parrochia* till 1648, when the Franciscan Osservanti obtained it, and built the present convent. The Church of S. Martino, on the other hand, had, certainly from 1111, a chapter and canons living in common under a superior. Nothing of any great interest to us seems to have befallen till 1466, when Leon Battista Alberti enjoyed the *Propositura*, the provostship, of the church, with the title of rector, and it was probably under his direction that the beautiful chancel we see to-day was built.

Save the choir and the portico of the baptistery to the right in the nave, the church is to-day a building of the sixteenth century; the fourteenth century fresco under the portico without, of S. Cristofano with the Child Jesus on his shoulder, having been saved from the older church it might seem, with the baptistery itself against which it is painted.

The font so strangely won, stands under a loggia to the right in the nave, and is all painted in fresco by Bicci di Lorenzo after 1430.[1] Above the arches on the north side is S. Martino dividing his cloak with a beggar, and under, the Annunciation, while over the arches on the east is the figure of our Lord surrounded by clouds of angels. Under the roof of the loggia,

[1] Carocci, *Comune di Lastra a Signa*, p. 10 and note.

Bicci has painted the four evangelists and the doctors of the church. Born in 1373, the son of Lorenzo di Bicci, Bicci di Lorenzo belonged to the school of the Daddi; the best artist his family produced, he was the father of Neri di Bicci whose numerous works litter Tuscany.[1] The font itself is worthy of attention. It is a work of the fifteenth century, as the inscription tells us: *Questa fonte anno facto fare gli operai della Compagnia della Vergine Maria, An.* MCCCCXXIII.; and the bàs-reliefs, from different hands it might seem, represent S. Michele Arcangiolo, the Baptism of our Lord, S. Martin giving away part of his cloak, the Madonna and Child, and our Lord as a pilgrim.

Over the second altar to the left in the nave, beside which is the tomb of old Agnolo Pandolfini, is a picture of the sixteenth century in the manner of Bronzino, representing the Holy Virgins. It is a fine canvas, and the figures are certainly portraits. Over the altar, next to it, is a picture of Madonna enthroned with our Lord, and about her S. Stephen and another saint; an early sixteenth century work in the manner of Ridolfo Ghirlandajo.

The two treasures of the church, however, are on the walls on either side the high altar. On the north wall are two panels, where, on a gold ground, some painter of the trecento has painted the Annunciation. Miracles of beauty, these two little paintings seem to me the loveliest things in the church. Yet that Madonna, painted by some Florentine master of the fifteenth century, now on the southern wall of the chancel here, is certainly a surprising and wonderful thing, made on some fortunate day, perhaps, by Botticini. Under, are the arms of the Conti Gangalandi.

From the terrace before the church a beautiful view

[1] A tabernacle by him is in the Church of S. Maria delle Selve, above Ponte a Signa.

of the Val d'Arno opens before you to the Duomo of Florence far away eastward, and the hills above the city. Northward you may spy out Prato, while, just across the river, Signa, piled on her hill, is almost lost in the olive gardens, and, nearer still, the great Strozzi villa, Villa delle Selve, looks across the vineyards to the valley and the hills.

But we have spent enough time within doors this summer morning: it is necessary to set out where the road leads to Malmantile on the hills, to Montelupo at the head of Val di Pesa.

Returning to Lastra, you follow the tram line till suddenly a paved road[1] turns southward to the right under S. Lucia, the old parish church of S. Michele, now a convent. Winding up this valley beside a torrent at first between the olive gardens, you presently come into a more naked land, and, keeping to the right at the second turning, in some three miles you see before you on the hill-top the great castello of Malmantile, utterly ruined now.[2]

It was somewhere about the middle of the twelfth century that the Florentines built the Castello of Malmantile. Documents, however, are wanting concerning it at that time, the earliest Repetti has been able to find being of the year 1247, and even that it seems possible to refer to another Malmantile in Chianti. The

[1] This road is the ancient *strada maestra e postale* between Florence and Pisa, and was used certainly when Malmantile was built to hold it, before the later, but yet ancient Via Pisana was built.

[2] If you care enough for such things, and I confess at once I do, you may take the first turn to the right about two miles after leaving Lastra, and so come to Lecceto. The church of SS. Jacopo and Filippo there has a strange altar-piece painted by many hands. In the midst, however, is a Madonna and Child by some Giottesque painter. The greater part of this latar piece is fifteenth century work.

THE CASTELLO OF MALMANTILE

Castello as we now see it was built in 1424, and it furnishes a very good example of what a Castello was; not a castle or even a fortress, but a walled and fortified village. Sometimes these Castelli were gathered round the Rocca or Castle of some lord, as at Campiglia d'Orcia, sometimes they were built close to an abbey, under whose jurisdiction and protection they were, at first certainly, as at Abbadia San Salvatore in Mont' Amiata,[1] but often too, as at S. Eraclio and S. Giacomo in the Valley of Spoleto, they were just strong walled villages capable of resisting a siege by the robber nobles of the neighbourhood and entirely secure from surprise.

Here at Malmantile you may enter the Castello by one gate and walk right through the village to the gate on the west. There the whole plain of Empoli spreads itself before you even to the sea. Due east on her hill-top the ruined tower of the Rocca of S. Miniato-al-Tedesco stands; opposite, across the river, Fucecchio is heaped on her hill, while away and away the great marble mountains of Carrara rise, those beautiful strange peaks of the Apuan Alps, while nearer, like an island in the plain, stand the Monti Pisani.

Perche i Pisani veder Lucca non ponno.

To the south lies Monte Albano, that huge uplifted horn on whose side Vinci and Artimino stand, and to the south across the rolling plain you may see S. Casciano and nearer Villa del Corno of the Strozzi, and again Tavarnelle, and at sunset, if you should be fortunate, S. Gimignano delle Belle Torri. There, in the shadow of the olives, under the old wall, it is good to rest and eat the golden-coloured bread and drink the red wine

[1] See on this subject of the Castello, *In Unknown Tuscany*, by Edward Hutton, with notes by William Heywood. (Methuen, 1909.)

of that poor place. There, too, you may well read the fantastic verses of Lorenzo Lippi, poet and buffoon, who, making fun of Tasso the sentimentalist, wrote instead of *Gerusalemme Conquistata*, *Malmantile Racquistato*. Malmantile in his allegory meaning, as indeed it does, *la cattiva tovaglia da tavola*, the "dirty table-cloth". And so what immortality Malmantile may enjoy to-day comes to it from the excellent, merry verses of that would-be painter.[1]

Just to the westward under the hill on which Malmantile stands, is the parish church S. Pietro al Malmantile or *in Selva* far enough away from the Castello. It is well worth a visit and is not more than a hundred yards from the road we must follow to Montelupo. Of very ancient foundation, the present building is quite modern, yet on the façade under the portico you will find frescoes of the fourteenth century representing S. Francis receiving the Stigmata, S. Augustine, S. Ambrose and S. Cristofano with Christ on his shoulder. And then within the church is one of those beautiful Giottesque crucifixes such as I found at Ruballa, which, more than any other form or thing, seem to recall for me the Christian centuries. And in themselves they are among the most lovely Italian works of the Middle Age. Other paintings, too, later and less sincere than these, you will find at S. Pietro, but nothing else to compare with that wonderful cross of some pupil of Giotto.

The road by which one comes to Malmantile from Lastra, runs past the Castello under its northern walls

[1] For all concerning Lorenzo Lippi, consult A. Neri, *Passatempi Letterari* (Genoa, 1888). Lorenzo Lippi was born in Florence in 1606. Invited to Innsbruck by the Archduchess Claudia, he remained there till her death, when he returned to Florence, having set out to be a painter, finding himself a poet. He died in 1664, and was buried in the tomb of his family in S. Maria Novella.

and follows across the hills to Montelupo. Of the views by the way I say nothing—who may well describe them; and indeed any description would be futile since if you follow the road you may see for yourself.

It is something under four miles from Malmantile to Montelupo; the road passes over the hills above the Arno, now and again you get a glimpse of the winding valley, sometimes you can only see the hills. Then suddenly at a turning of the way the tower of the old Rocca of Montelupo comes in sight, set on its hill where the Pesa passes into the Arno on the way to the sea. Resting in the shadow of that ancient tower looking over the river where it bends round the great Medici villa of Ambrogiana, or flows swiftly under the towering Castello of Capraja, on the farther bank of the stream, we may well remind ourselves of the history of these fortresses.

If it was the Cadolinghi and the Gangalandi who held the eastern gate of the pass of the Gonfolina, it was the Counts of Capraja who held the western gate, till in 1203 Florence took it from them. Long and long before that, however, Capraja stood holding the pass against any. No doubt these Counts, Alberti they were, gave trouble enough to the Florentines, so that at last they said, as the tale goes,

> Per distrugger questa Capra
> Non ci vuol altro che un Lupo,

"to destroy this goat, nothing is needed but a wolf," so they built Montelupo, and taking Capraja, perhaps because they already had a fortress on the left bank of Arno at Malmantile, they abandoned Montelupo and established Capraja as one of their forts. Then Montelupo seems to have got out of hand so that it became necessary to destroy it. "In the year of Christ 1203," says Villani in his simple way, "when

Brunellino Brunelli de' Razzanti was consul in Florence with his colleagues, the Florentines destroyed the Castello of Montelupo, because it would not obey the Comune."[1] Nevertheless it was for Capraja was reserved the more dreadful vengeance. It fell, according to Villani, in 1249, when Conte Rodolfo gave asylum in his Rocca of Capraja to the heads of the Guelf party, who fled from Florence, and therefore Federigo II. and the Ghibellines laid siege to the place.

Now Federigo had been in Lombardy, but in the spring of 1249 he came south into Tuscany, leaving his natural son Enzo, King of Sardinia, with many horsemen as his vicar-general over the Lombard League. When he arrived at S. Miniato-al-Tedesco he found that the Ghibelline party, which was then ruling the city of Florence, had laid siege in the month of March to the fortress of Capraja, wherein were the leaders of the chief families of Guelf nobles exiled from Florence, as I have said. Then, says Villani, "the Emperor would not enter into the city of Florence, nor ever had he entered therein but avoided it, for the soothsayers or some devil had told him that he would die in Florence and therefore he feared greatly. Nevertheless he came to the army, and went to sojourn in the Castello of Fucecchio and left the greater part of his followers at the siege of Capraja, which stronghold being tight held, and having very scanty provisions, was not able to last out longer; so the besieged took counsel together as to whether they should parley, and they would have been granted any liberal terms which they desired; but a certain shoemaker, an exile from Florence who had been a leading Ancient, not being invited to the said Council, came to the gate very angry and cried to the host that the town could hold out no

[1] Villani, *Cronica*, lib. v., cap. 31.

longer, so that they would not consent to treat. Wherefore those within, as dead men, surrendered themselves to the mercy of the Emperor. And this was in the month of May in the year of Christ 1249. And the captains of the said Guelfs were Count Ridolfo of Capraja and Messer Rinieri Zingane of the Buondelmonti. And when they came to Fucecchio to the Emperor he took them all with him prisoners to Apulia; and afterwards by reason of letters and ambassadors sent to him by the Ghibellines of Florence he put out the eyes of all which belonged to the great noble families in Florence and then drowned them in the sea, save Messer Rinieri Zingane, because he found him so wise and great of soul that he would not put him to death, but he put out his eyes, who afterwards ended his life as a monk in the island of Monte Cristo. And the aforesaid shoemaker was spared by the besiegers; and when the Guelfs returned to Florence he also returned thither, and being recognised in the parliament, at the outcry of the people he was stoned and vilely dragged along the ground by the children, and thrown into the moat."[1]

That, and the affair of Pier della Vigna, might seem to be sufficient answer to those who in their blind hatred of the Holy See have chosen even this wild beast for praise. So Federigo dealt with all who were against him. The Pope called him anti-christ and broke him. Therefore, and truly, where he was hell seems to have gathered itself together, about the cruelty of his heart. With him, in spite of a host of shadows, one may truly say the farce of the Empire came to an end in Italy.

Though there is nothing to see in Capraja, and little in Montelupo, there is one picture in the Church of S. Giovanni Evangelista there, that church which till

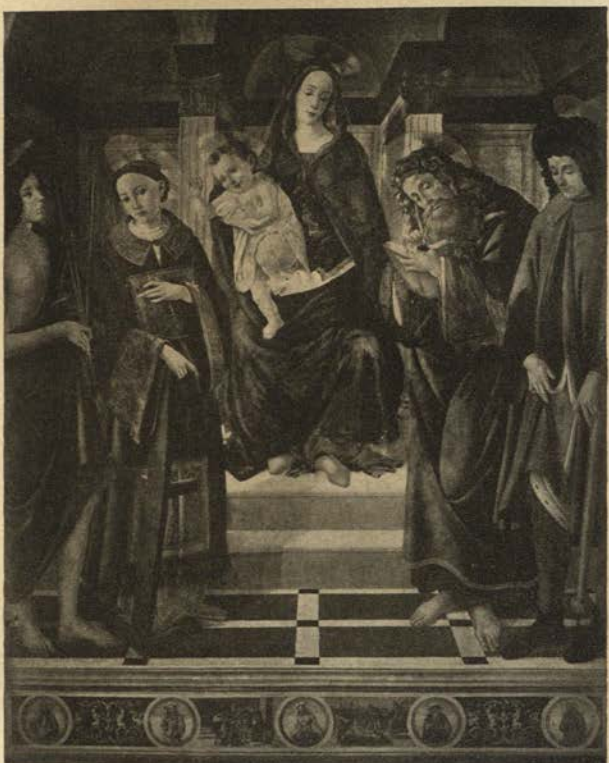
[1] Villani, *Cronica*, lib. vi., cap. 35.

1796 was the old Dominican *ospizio*, which is worth all the journey you have made. Of old it stood over the altar in the Priory of the Rocca, but now it is in the south aisle of this, the Pieve of Montelupo.

It is not any new vision of Madonna that some pupil of Botticelli has painted for that quiet country church, but the same half-weary maiden of whom Sandro has told us so often, whose honour is too great for her, whose destiny is more than she can bear. Already she has been overwhelmed by our praise and petitions; she has closed her eyes, she has turned away her head, and while the Jesus Parvulus lifts His tiny hands in blessing, she is indifferent, holding Him languidly as though but half-attentive to those priceless words which S. John, with the last light of a smile still lingering round his eyes, notes so carefully in his book. Something of the same eagerness, graver, and more youthful, you may see in the figure of S. Sebastian, who, holding three arrows daintily in his hand, has suddenly looked up at the sound of that divine childish voice. Two other figures, S. Lorenzo and S. Roch, listen with a sort of intent sadness there under that splendid portico, where Mary sits on a throne, she who was the carpenter's wife, with so little joy or even surprise. Below in the *gradino*, you may see certain saints' heads,[1] with dancing satyrs between them, S. Lorenzo giving alms and his martyrdom too, and in the midst the Risen Christ. Nor after all is this the only treasure of the church, for behind the high altar there is a beautiful Giottesque Coronation of the Virgin amid a crowd of saints and angels.

Coming out of S. Giovanni Evangelista and wandering down to the river, perhaps past the workshops whose pottery was once so famous, so that when all

[1] S. Buonaventura, S. Francesco, S. Jerome and two others.



Alinari

MADONNA AND CHILD

From the picture of the School of Botticelli, in the Church of S. Giovanni, at Montelupo

the world knew some secret thing it was said, *È scritta nei boccali di Montelupo*, "it is written on the jugs of Montelupo," you see not far away beside the river, caught as it were in the crook of its arm, the Villa dell' Ambrogiana, a favourite residence of Ferdinando de' Medici, who came there several times each year for the hunting.[1] It is a great square building with a tower at each corner and was built and used by Ferdinando for other purposes besides that of a hunting lodge. For in 1592 in October, Donna Eleonora Orsini, Ferdinando's niece, was married there to the Duke of Segni, Conte Federigo Sforza, and after the wedding a banquet was spread in the great hall served by pages dressed "in white satin, with Spanish cloaks of red velvet embroidered in gold with the Medici arms, and collars of fine lace; four negroes in rich oriental costume handed the dishes, and the servants who waited on the other guests, seated at small tables round the hall, wore sky-blue liveries trimmed with gold lace and a short sword at their sides" In October again in the year 1600, Maria de' Medici, leaving Florence to become the bride of France, stayed awhile at the Ambrogiana on her way. And then in 1791, it was here that Ferdinando III. met his bride, Luisa Maria of Bourbon. But those days come no more. The woods where Ferdinando hunted have long ago been cut down, and the Villa dell' Ambrogiana is become a madhouse.

[1] For a full account of this villa, see Janet Ross, *Florentine Villas* (Dent, 1905), p. 88 *et seq.*

VIII

THE CERTOSA, POZZOLATICO, S. GERSOLÈ, S. GIUSTO, S. MARGHERITA A MONTICI, TORRE DEL GALLO, POGGIO IMPERIALE, S. MINIATO AL MONTE

THE Certosa di Val d'Ema[1] stands on a hill to the right of the Via Romana about a mile to the southward of Galluzzo. You catch sight of it soon after you leave Le Due Strade, set on the top of its beautiful hill, Montacuto, like some great *castello*, or fortress perhaps, a fortress that lies fallen, alas, before the armies of greed and hatred. If you come by tram to this sad, delicious place, you follow Via Romana all the way, through the suburbs of Le Due Strade and Galluzzo, but if you drive or walk thither you may go by the country road through the vineyards and the corn scattered with irises, hedged with roses, till almost under the monastery you turn at last into the Roman Way, climbing the hill out of Galluzzo quite past the monastery, till, turning suddenly to the right, the road up Montacuto itself is before you; that steep way where the beggars linger still all day long in the shadow and the few monks, interlopers now in their own house, wait to give you the ghost of a welcome.

[1] A tram leaves the Mercato Nuovo every twenty minutes from 6.35 A.M. to 8.15 P.M. for the Certosa, and one returns thence every twenty minutes from 7.11 A.M. to 8.11 P.M.

It was Niccolò Acciajuoli, *Gran Siniscalco* of Queen Giovanna of Naples, who founded the place in 1341, Orcagna, as it is said, building it for him not without magnificence. In that year at any rate the *Priori* of the Certosa of Bologna and of that of Maggiano in the Sanese took possession of Montacuto and of all those lands which Niccolò Acciajuoli had given to the new monastery. Yet his intention does not seem to have been to found merely another monastery for Religious; he himself directed the building, and we find him eager to place within these strong walls, four-square on the hill-top, not only a church, a chapter-house, a sacristy and several cloisters with dwellings for monks and brethren, guest houses and indeed all the necessities of a monastery, but a great school also, a school for fifty boys where they might be taught the liberal arts, that more human learning which was just then coming into the world. Niccolò, however, died too soon to carry out his dream, and at his death, the monastery being left without money, the school came to nothing, and the library of precious manuscripts which he had founded there little by little was scattered again. And this might seem one of the greatest misfortunes, not for Florence alone, but for all Italy, that when the monasteries were suppressed they were not put to the use of schools as they were in more than one case in England. A really great public school might well have arisen on this hill in this Carthusian Convent, an Italian Charterhouse, where carrying out the intention of the founder and generously expanding it, the Italian Government, in our time at any rate, might have founded one of those splendid institutions which Italy so sadly needs. Any such achievement, however, might seem impossible among a people the least public-spirited in the world, where no public service is above reproach, no politician above sus-

spicion, where even as I write the moneys subscribed for the outcasts of Calabria have mysteriously disappeared in the hands of those who, without honour, without patriotism, without energy or faith, have made of modern Italy the hopeless abomination which we see.

The great gate of the monastery stands open at the top of the hill; entering there and turning to the right another gate stands before a great stone staircase which leads into a beautiful court, built at the end of the sixteenth century; and indeed to-day there is but little left save the fortifications dating from 1349 of the work which Orcagna may have built or designed; the monastery as we see it being work, for the most part, of the late sixteenth century with the additions of a later time.

Out of this great court you pass directly into the church, not, however, without visiting the little chapel of the travellers where there still remains a Holy Family by Andrea del Sarto.

The church, consecrated in 1369, but as we see it a building of the sixteenth century, is divided into two choirs, one for the clergy and one for laymen. The stalls in the first are late sixteenth century work, and the fresco over the high altar is the death of S. Bruno, a work by Poccetti; Giambologna is said to have cast the bronze statues about the pyx there. However that may be, it is not in such baroque work as this, that we shall to-day take delight, but perhaps in the great chapel on the right which is said to have been built by Orcagna where are several much repainted works of the Giottesques; and in the chapel in the crypt, where the beautiful tombs of the Acciajuoli still make part of the pavement. They too are said to be the work of Orcagna, and certainly date from his time. There, about Niccolò, the founder, dead

CERTOSA DI VAL D'EMA

in 1366, lie Lorenzo his son, who died before him in 1353 in Naples, and whose ashes were brought here, not without splendour; Acciajuolo his father, and Lapa his sister, the wife of Manente Buondelmonte: beside them, too, lies Donato Acciajuoli, the humanist, who died in Milan in 1478, for whom Poliziano himself, as it is said, wrote an epitaph. In the neighbouring Chapel of S. Andrea lies another member of that great house, Cardinal Agnolo Acciajuoli, dead in 1409, and his tomb, so they say, is the work of Donatello—Donatello or his pupils, yet it seems without the energy of that great master.

From the church you pass into the great cloister, that beautiful place for which, as they say, Michelangelo designed the well-head, and the della Robbia carved and painted sixty-seven medallions with heads of prophets and saints, twenty of which seem to be the work of Giovanni himself.[1] While in the great hall of the capitolo, behind the altar, you may see the best work of Mariotto Albertinelli, painted in 1504 and signed too—the Crucifixion of our Lord—and that is perhaps the finest picture the convent still possesses. For indeed the Certosa di Val d'Ema is no longer rich in pictures or in sculptures. It is not for their sakes we are come here, but for the sake of the place itself, its quietness and beauty, there on its hill between the Ema and the Greve. So as you pass from one cell to another, each consisting of three little chambers, and each with its marvellous view, it is of the country you are thinking all the time, those hills and valleys and olive gardens which as seen from here seem to possess a new beauty and serenity. And at last, still thinking perhaps of that view towards Florence over Val d'Ema, you pass almost heedlessly through the

[1] Maud Cruttwell, *Luca and Andrea della Robbia, and their successors* (Dent, 1902), p. 343.

apartments where Charles V. stayed, where Pius VI. was really a prisoner, where Pius VII. sojourned too, into the *Farmacia*, where you may buy chocolate, and perfumes, and liqueurs, turning at last almost with relief out of this spoiled artificial place, a "national monument" truly which Italy has not known how to use, to the ever-living joy of the countryside, the hills and the roads and the ways of men.

Returning to the Via Romana, and following it a few yards towards Florence, just over the brow of the hill, a road turns up on the right, Via di Parigi, winding over those very hills towards Pozzolatico and the village of S. Gersolè. By that way you pass up the valley of the Ema, but above it on the hills, and presently, as you come to the top of the hill, Villa Petrucci stands before you, a little to the left on the way. Then the road descends a little and you take the first turning to the right, passing in a few yards the little shrine by the wayside, Cappella de' Corbinelli, which still hides a beautiful fifteenth century relief of Madonna with Bambino Gesù in her arms, by some pupil maybe of Mino da Fiesole. In the distance on its high hill the Church of S. Pietro a Gersolè stands before you, and then at the first cross road is the shrine of the Croce della Via with a fresco much damaged, by some fifteenth century painter, again of Madonna and her Son. Turning here to the right in a few minutes you find yourself before the Church of SS. Stefano e Caterina at Pozzolatico.

Pozzolatico, or as it is sometimes called Poggiolatico, is a *contrada* whose history goes back at least to 1022. The Church of S. Stefano once in the *piviere* of the Impruneta, was in the thirteenth century in the patronage of the Bishops of Florence. It is to-day, however, in spite of its antiquity, mainly a building of the eighteenth century, its real interest lying not in

itself, but in a picture which it happens to possess of Madonna and Child, painted on a gold ground by some follower of Giotto, a very beautiful thing; while the ciborio in the chancel is a charming piece of sculpture of the fifteenth century. Such things scattered as they are with something of the infinity of wild flowers in Tuscany have, too, something of their beauty. We shall never willingly pass them by without a glance of greeting, any more than we should pass a wild rose on even the dustiest highway, since at sight of it something, we know not why, stirs in our hearts.

Leaving Pozzolatico, the road passes behind the church, and winds under the great villa, lately Villa Lardarel, which once belonged, long and long ago, in the fourteenth century, to the Ricci family. Leaving this on the right, keeping, that is to say, to the left after passing the church of Pozzolatico, the road winds upwards in about a mile to S. Gersolè.

S. Gersolè is a *casale*, just a few villas and *case di compagna* set on the hill of Mezzomonte, some six hundred and fifty feet above the sea. The strange name comes to it from its church, which is dedicated to S. Pietro in Gerusalemme, as the Bulls of Adrian IV. and Nicholas IV., published in 1156 and 1291, tell us. S. Gersolè is celebrated for its great and excellent wine, as Francesco Redi's song tells us,[1]

E più grato di quelch' è
Il buon vin di Gersolè.

And then, not far away, the Conti Alberti had a villa, that towered house which we see to-day beside the canonica. Was it not such a place as this which Leon

[1] Francesco Redi, born in Arezzo in 1626, died in Pisa in 1698 The best of his poetical writings is the *Bacco in Toscana*, published in Florence in 1685. Consult Gaetano Imbert, *Il Bacco in Toscana di F. R. e la poesia ditisambica* (Città di Castello, Laps, 1890).

Alberti regretted with so much sincerity in the *Governo della Famiglia*, that consoling book?

There is nothing to-day worth seeing in the church, which has been altogether restored out of recognition; but, as though to console us, even as we turn away the view across Val d'Ema opens and we see the great line of hills between us and Florence, where Torre del Gallo stands beside S. Margherita a Montici, while between them hides the Church of S. Miniato al Monte.

So we pass downhill ever to the right, till, in some half mile, where the road branches, we follow straight on to the left, leaving the cypresses of Montaguto not far away to the right. The Castello of Montaguto, or as some say Montaugutulo, "dell' Impruneta," as it was called to distinguish it from the Montaguto della Certosa, is now just a villa, which nevertheless retains its parochial church of S. Maria a Montaguto. In old times the place was the lordship of the noble family of Adimari, Rolando di Signorello of that race in 1094 giving his Castello into the care of the Badia di Monte-Scalari. It is to this place, too, that Villani seems to refer when he tells of the vengeance Florence took upon the Bianchi in 1302.[1] However that may be, Montaguto is to-day an interesting and very beautiful relic from the Middle Age.

Following the road, at the bottom of the hill, is a spoiled shrine; leaving it, we take the road to the right uphill to S. Giusto. Of very ancient foundation the Church of S. Giusto a Ema was long and long ago in the patronage of the Amidei, and later of the Gherardini who had houses hereabout. Its interest for us to-day, however, is that it possesses a very lovely picture by Pontormo, over the first altar on the north, of Madonna enthroned with our Lord, surrounded by

[1] *Cf.* Repetti, *op. cit.*, vol. iii., p. 270, and Villani, *Cronica*, lib. viii., cap. 53.

angels and two saints; it is one of the best of this englected painter's works.

From S. Giusto we turn to the left by a way through the vineyards under the church, and follow it till we come into the high road and turn to the right with it, crossing Ema and coming into the poor village of Jozzoli. Following the road to the right, through the wretched street, we take the second turning to the left, up the steep hill that leads at last to Pian di Giullari. At the top of the hill we turn to the right, however, and in some three hundred yards come to the Church of S. Margherita a Montici. S. Margherita a Montici stands on the highest point of the hills which divide Arno from Ema. The church is a daughter of the Duomo, and in the thirteenth century was in the possession of the Compagnia di S. Maria to whom the Bishop of Florence in 1296 conceded an indulgence, amplified in 1304 by the Cardinal Niccolò da Prato, Bishop of Ostia and Apostolic delegate in Tuscany, busy just then, though unsuccessfully, with the pacification of Florence.[1] It was here, too, that the two Gherardini, condemned in 1349 by the Potestà for the murder of a certain Firidolfi da Panzano, took refuge.

Within, the church is beautiful, and there in the transepts are two very strange but lovely pictures; to the south a Madonna and Child, the work of some unknown contemporary of Giotto, and to the north an early Sienese picture of S. Margherita and the history of her life.

On the opposite hill, across the valley of Gamberaja, rises Torre del Gallo, a modern restoration of that old castle of the Galli family from whose tower Galileo is

[1] Concerning this indulgence I can find nothing. But it will perhaps be remembered that it was on S. Margaret's Day, 1304, that Florence had her marvellous escape from the Ghibellines and the Uberti. See Villani, *Cronica*, lib. viii., cap. 72

said to have made his observations, consoled in his unhappiness by the beauty of the world about him.

Returning from S. Margherita,[1] through Pian di Giullari to Arcetri where the road forks, the second turning thence on the left brings us to the Palace of Poggio Imperiale, now a girls' school.

"Formerly," Mrs. Ross tells us in her excellent book on the Florentine Villas, "it was called Poggio Baroncelli, from the rich and powerful family of that name who owned large possessions on this side of Florence, and turned an old castle into a dwelling-house; but they failed in 1487, when the villa and much of the land belonging to it became the property of Agnolo Pandolfini, whose descendants sold it to Piero d'Alamanno Salviati. In 1548 the Salviati were declared rebels, and Cosimo I. seized all their possessions." Professor Anguillesi, in his book on the palaces of the Crown in Tuscany, tells us that it is unknown how and when Poggio Imperiale passed from the Baroncelli to the Salviati. Cosimo I., however, gave it to his favourite daughter, Donna Isabella, the wife of Duke Giordano Orsini of Rome, on condition that if she died without a son it should return to the Crown of Tuscany.[2] After the tragic death of Donna Isabella, who was murdered by her husband at Cerreto-Guidi, Grand Duke Francesco I. gave the villa to him and to his son by his murdered wife, Don Virgilio Orsini, for their lifetime. Ferdinando I., however, in 1591, extended the gift to the son of Don Virgilio and their male descendants for ever. This branch of the Orsini family, however, soon seems to have died out, and by 1622 the villa was in the hands of the Odes-

[1] If the road past S. Margherita is followed downhill to Florence, while you miss S. Miniato, which can be visited another day, a very beautiful view of Florence is gained.

[2] Repetti, *op. cit.*, vol. iv., p. 492.

calchi, from whom the Grand Duchess Maria Maddalena of Austria, wife of Cosimo II., bought the place for 25,000 ducats. It was she who, in honour of the Austrian Imperial family, changed its name from Villa Baroncelli to Poggio Imperiale, as the inscription over the gate testifies :—

Villa Imperialis ab Austriacis
Augustis Nomen Consecuta
Futurae Magnae Duces Etruriae
Vestro Ocio Delicisque
Aeternum Inservat.

The Grand Duchess had brought up at Poggio Imperiale Violante, her niece, the only child of Claudia de' Medici and Federigo della Rovere. Violante married Maria Maddalena's son, Ferdinando II., from whom she bought the place after his mother's death. She, as well as her aunt, embellished it, but it was Leopoldo I. in the eighteenth century who rebuilt the place as we now see it, spending some 1,300,000 lire upon it. "When he, on the death of his brothers in 1790," says Mrs. Ross, "became Emperor of Austria, his second son, Ferdinando III., succeeded to the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, and gave hospitality at Poggio Imperiale to the King of Sardinia and his wife, who had been compelled to quit Piedmont by the revolution. Charles Emanuel IV. and Marie Clotilde arrived on 19th January, 1799, only to be driven out after a month of quiet and repose. They fled to Sardinia, and Napoleon, having abolished Tuscany with a stroke of a pen, the Grand Duke took refuge with his brothers in Vienna. A new kingdom, Etruria, was then created, with Ludovico of Bourbon, son of the Duke of Parma, as king. He died in 1803, leaving his young widow as regent for his little son, and Poggio Imperiale became her favourite residence." Then Napoleon abolished the kingdom of Etruria

and the queen-regent and her son went into exile. Another mistress ruled at Poggio Imperiale, Napoleon's sister, Elise Bonaparte, married to Felice Baciocchi, now Prince of Lucca and Piombino; and there in the great villa they celebrated Napoleon's victories. In 1814, however, she too crept away. It was in 1822 that Carlo Alberto came as an exile to Florence, and his father-in-law, Ferdinando III., lent him Poggio Imperiale. There his son, Vittorio Emanuele, the future King of Italy, was brought up. And it is said that when Vittorio Emanuele entered Florence as King in April, 1860, his first visit was to the great palace on the hill which had once received him as an exile.

Returning from the palace past Il Santuccio down Via S. Leonardo to the Viale de' Colli, along which, turning to the right, you pass for some three parts of a mile the whole beautiful city spread out before you, you come presently to S. Miniato.

Sitting down at evening on the platform before the church, watching now and then the shadows steal down from the hills over the beautiful city at our feet, we may well read what her first historian says of this very place.

"Now," says Villani in his first book,[1] "now that we have briefly made some mention of our neighbouring cities in Tuscany, we will return to our subject and tell of our city of Florence. As we recounted before, the said city was ruled long time under the government and lordship of the emperors of Rome, and oft-times the emperors came to sojourn in Florence when they were journeying into Lombardy and into Germany, and into France to conquer prisoners. And we find that Decius, the emperor, in the first year of

[1] Villani, *Cronica*, lib. i., cap. 57.

THE TOWER OF S. MINIATO AL MONTE

his reign, which was in the year of Christ 270, was in Florence, the treasure-house and chancelry of the empire, sojourning there for his pleasure; and the said Decius cruelly persecuted the Christians whereso-ever he could hear of them or find them, and he heard tell how the blessed Saint Miniato was living as a hermit near to Florence with his disciples and com-panions in a wood which was called Arisbotto in Flor-ence behind the place where now stands his Church, above the city of Florence. This blessed Miniato was first-born son to the King of Armenia, and having left his kingdom for the faith of Christ, to do penance and to be far away from his kingdom, he went over seas to gain pardon at Rome, and then betook himself to the said wood, which was in those days wild and solitary, foras-much as the city of Florence did not extend and was not settled beyond the Arno, but was all on this side; save only there was one bridge across the Arno, not, how-ever, where the bridges now are. And it is said by many that it was the ancient bridge of the Fiesolani which led from Girone to Candegghi, and this was the ancient and direct way from Rome to Fiesole and to go into Lombardy and across the mountains. The said Emperor Decius caused the said blessed Miniato to be taken, as his history relates: great gifts and rewards were offered him as to a king's son to the end he should deny Christ; and he, con-stant and firm in the faith, would have none of his gifts, but endured divers martyrdoms. In the end the said Decius caused him to be beheaded where now stands the Church of Santa Candida alla Croce at Gorgo; and many faithful followers of Christ received martyrdom at that place, and when the head of the blessed Miniato had been cut off, by a miracle of Christ, with his hands he set it again upon his trunk, and on his feet passed over Arno and went up to the

hill where now stands his church, where at that time there was a little oratory in the name of the blessed Peter the Apostle, and where many bodies of holy martyrs were buried. And when S. Miniato was come to that place he gave up his soul to Christ, and his body was there secretly buried by the Christians; the which place by reason of the merits of the blessed S. Miniato, was devoutly venerated by the Florentines after that they were become Christians, and a little church was built there in his honour. But the great and noble church of marble which is there now in our times, we find to have been built later by the zeal of the venerable Father Alibrando, Bishop and citizen of Florence in the year of Christ 1013, begun on the 26th day of the month of April by the commandment and authority of the Catholic and holy Emperor Henry II. of Bavaria, and of his wife the holy Empress Cunegonda, who were reigning in those times; and they presented and endowed the said church with many rich possessions in Florence and in the country, for the good of their souls, and caused the said church to be repaired and rebuilt of marbles, as it is now; and they caused the body of the blessed Miniato to be translated to the altar which is beneath the vaulting of the said church, with much reverence and solemnity by the said Bishop and the clergy of Florence with all the people, both men and women, of the city of Florence; but afterwards the said church was completed by the Commonwealth of Florence and the stone steps were made which lead down by the hill; and the consuls of the art of the Calimala were put in charge of the said work of S. Miniato, and were to protect it."

But it is not only of S. Miniato, so long ago, that we shall think in this beautiful and mysterious place, but of S. Giovanni Gualberto too, who forgave his

Alinari

THE ANNUNCIATION

From the fresco by Baldovinetti in the Church of S. Miniato at Monte

Alinari

THE ANNUNCIATION

From the fresco by Baldovinetti in the Church of S. Miniato al Monte

brother's murderer, when as it chanced he met him on this very hill, as he came into Florence on Good Friday morning in 1018.[1] Nor shall we forget Michelangelo either, who fortified the place when, in 1529, he tried to save Florence from the Medici, swathing the tower, as it is said, with mattresses to preserve it from the cannon-shot; while it was from this hill that Cosimo I. held the city in leash.

The Abbey of S. Miniato al Monte, on that hill that of old was called *del Re*, was built, as Villani has told us, in 1013, near to a more ancient and smaller church to which Charlemagne is said to have offered royal tribute in honour of S. Miniato. The patron was the Bishop of Florence, Ildebrando, *uomo di grande animo e di magnifiche opere pieno*, as Repetti tells us, and it was he who introduced the Cluniac monks there not without a generous gift. The *Consoli dell' Arte di Calimala* too contributed towards the building, instituting there *Opera* for its maintenance and conservation as the inscription of bronze proves which stands still over the ancient façade. Restored again and again, it still keeps much of its ancient beauty. For to-day S. Miniato is one of the most beautiful and the best preserved of the Romanesque churches of Tuscany. Built like an ancient basilica with a great nave and two aisles, the choir and high altar are raised on twenty-eight beautiful rosy antique pillars, high above the confession, where S. Miniato sleeps through the centuries. The tribune, worked in mosaic, still keeps one of its ancient windows, a great slab of semi-transparent marble, through which a languid golden light fills the church. The beautiful mosaic pavement dates from 1207. The fading frescoes of the aisles, the splendour and quiet of this great and beautiful church that has guarded

[1] See my *Florence and Northern Tuscany* (Methuen, 1907), p. 360 *et seq.*

Florence almost from the beginning, that has seen Buondelmonte die at the foot of the statue of Mars, that has heard the voice of Dante and watched the flight of Corso Donati, have a peculiar fascination, almost ghostly in their strangeness, beyond anything else to be found in Florence. And if for the most part the church is so ancient as to rival the Baptistery itself, the Renaissance has left there more than one beautiful thing—the exquisite frescoes of the Life of S. Benedict by Spinello Aretino in the sacristy; the chapel between the two flights of steps leading to the choir, which Michelozzo built in 1448 for Piero de' Medici, to hold the Crucifix, now in S. Trinità, which bowed to S. Giovanni Gualberto when he forgave his brother's murderer. It is, however, the Capella di S. Jacopo, certainly one of the greatest material treasures of Florence, that will hold us longest—that chapel in the left aisle built in 1461 by Antonio Rossellino, where the young Cardinal Jacopo of Portugal lies in one of the loveliest of all Tuscan tombs, and there Luca della Robbia has placed some of his most charming terra-cottas, and Alessio Baldovinetti has painted the Annunciation, in fresco. Is there anything lovelier in all Florence than that ghost-like fresco? Certainly in all Tuscany there is nothing more lovely than that tomb, carved in 1467 by Antonio Rossellino for the body of the young cardinal, but twenty-six years old when he died, "having lived in the flesh as though he were freed from it, an angel rather than a man". Over the beautiful sarcophagus, on a bed beside which two boy-angels wait, the young cardinal sleeps, his delicate hands folded, at rest at last. Above, two angels kneel, about to give him the crown of glory which fadeth not away, and Madonna, borne from heaven by the children, comes with her Son to welcome him home. There, in the most characteristic work of the fifteenth century,

you find man still thinking about death, not as a trance out of which we shall awaken to some terrible remembrance, but as sleep, a sweet and frágile slumber, that has something of the drooping of the flowers about it, in a certain touching beauty and regret that is never bitter, but like the ending of a song or the close of a fair day of spring, that rightly, though not without sadness, passes into silence, into night, in which shine only the eternal stars.

It is strange that of all the difficult hills in Italy, it should be *this*—the old steep way *hither* from Porta S. Niccolò, in truth *via* Crucis—that came into Dante's mind when, in the Twelfth Purgatorio, he sees the ascent to the second *cornice* where is purged the sin of envy.

> Come a man destra, per salire al monte,
> Dove siede la chiesa, che soggioga
> La ben guidata sopra Rubaconte,
> Si rompe del montar l' ardita foga,
> Per le scalce, che si fero ad etade
> Ch'era sicuro 'l quaderno e la doga. . . .

Something of the immense sadness of that terrible hill seems to linger to-day about the *Monte alle Croci:* it is truly a hill of the dead over which hovers, pointing the way, some angel,—

> la creatura bella
> Bianco vestita, e nella faccia quale
> Par tremolando mattutina stella.

The Convent of S. Salvatore—S. Francesco al Monte, as it was called of old—was built in 1480 after a design by Cronaca. Hesitating among the cypresses on the verge of the olive gardens, Michelangelo called it *la sua bella Villanella*, and truly in its warm simplicity and shy loveliness it is just that, a

[1] *Purgatorio*, cant. ixi., 100-5.

beautiful peasant girl among the vines in a garden of olives. But she has been stripped of her treasures, her trinkets of silver, her pretty gold chains, her gown of taffetas, her kerchief of silk—(do you not remember the verses of Lorenzo?)—and all these you will find to-day, fading out of use in the Uffizi, where, in a palace that has become a museum, they are most out of place; thus they have robbed the peasants for the sake of the gold of the tourists, the sterile ejaculations of the critics.

It is well not to return to the city by the tramway, which rushes through the trees of the Viale Michelangelo like I know not what hideous and shrieking beast of prey, but to wander down towards the Piazzale, and then, just before you come to it, on your left, by S. Salvatore, to go down to Porta S. Miniato, that "gap in the wall," and then to pass by the old wall itself up the hill to Porta S. Giorgio among the olives between the towers under the Belvedere. It is the most beautiful of all the gates of the city, little, too, still keeping its fresco of the fourteenth century.

IX

TO THE IMPRUNETA[1]

AS on the way to the Certosa, so in going to the Impruneta, we follow Via Romana all the way, till at Tavarnuzze we leave it for the by-ways. The old road from Florence for Rome leaves the city by the gate called Porta Romana, or Porta di S. Pier Gattolini, from the church just within the walls, and though doubtless it generally bore the former title as it does now, when but few set out thence for Rome, Repetti always speaks of it by the latter name. The great road that thus leaves the city southward, runs through the *borgo* of Galluzzo, climbs the hill under the Certosa, drops into the Val di Greve, crosses the stream, and after winding round the hill of Montebuoni, climbs the long ascent of Scopeti, and passing through S. Casciano in Val di Pesa, crosses that stream too, by the Ponte Nuovo not far from Strada, and runs through Tavarnelle and Barberino, joining the great mediæval international highway, Via Francigena,[2] at last at Poggibonsi for Siena and the Eternal City.

[1] The tram takes you to Tavarnuzze from Mercato Nuovo. The route described is a good carriage road all the way.

[2] For a full account and itinerary of the Via Francigena, see my *In Unknown Tuscany*, with notes by W. Heywood. (Methuen, 1909.)

By this way, when it was open, that is to say when Siena was friendly, or afraid, by the Via Aretina, when this way was closed all the traffic of the Middle Age and the Renaissance, passed between Florence and Rome. It was certainly by this way that Donatello passed with Brunellesco his friend, soon after that great and proud man had withdrawn from the contest with Ghiberti, for the Baptistery gates. By this way, too, went Lorenzo il Magnifico, the Peace of Italy, on that adventurous journey to the astonished King of Naples, to risk everything, and to win.

Crossing Ema by Ponte di Certosa, the great road climbs the beautiful hill under the Certosa, only to leave it, and to pass over those olive-clad ridges south of Florence, as a ship passes over the waves, sometimes on the crest, sometimes in the trough of the sea. Thus the Via Romana sinks into the Val di Greve, following the way of the valley for some two miles, till at Tavarnuzze it bends suddenly as the stream has done, round about the hill of Montebuoni.

Tavarnuzze, where we leave the tramway, has nothing to keep us even for a moment; our road lies not along Via Romana, but to the left over the hills, to Montebuoni, the eyrie of the Buondelmonti.

Nothing is left to-day of the Rocca of the Buondelmonti, which Florence took and threw down in 1135, compelling the lords of that house to enter the city, and thereby, as it happened, laying the foundation of that horrid strife of Guelf and Ghibelline, which was to exile half her inhabitants. "In the year of Christ 1135," says Villani, "the fortress of Montebuono was standing, which was very strong, and pertained to the house of Buondelmonti, which were *Cattani*, ancient gentlemen of the country, and from the name of this their *castello*, the house of Buondelmonti took its name;

and by reason of its strength, and because the road ran at the foot thereof, therefore they took toll, for the which thing the Florentines did not desire, nor would they suffer such a fortress hard-by the city; and they went thither with an army in the month of June and took it, on condition that the fortress should be destroyed, and the rest of the possessions should still pertain to the said *Cattani*, and that they should come and dwell in Florence. And thus the Commonwealth of Florence began to grow, and by force, rather than by right, their territory increased, and they subdued to their jurisdiction every noble of the district, and destroyed the fortresses."[1] That was in 1135. Eighty years later, in 1215, the tremendous fifth act of the tragedy of the fall of the nobles began in Florence. It is a well-known tale, yet Villani's words are so simple and so few that I cannot forbear to set them down again.[2]

"In the year of Christ 1215 Messer Gherardo Orlandi being Podestà in Florence, one Messer Buondelmonte dei Buondelmonti, a noble citizen of Florence, had promised to take to wife a maid of the house of the Amidei, honourable and noble citizens; and afterwards as the said Messer Buondelmonte, who was very charming and a good horseman, was riding through the city, a lady of the house of Donati called to him, reproaching him as to the lady to whom he was betrothed, that she was not beautiful or worthy of him, and saying: 'I have kept this my daughter for you'; whom she showed to him, and she was most beautiful; and immediately, by the inspiration of the devil, he was so taken by her, that he was betrothed and wedded to her, for which thing the kinsfolk of the first be-

[1] Villani, *Cronica*, lib. iv. cap. 36.

[2] It might seem needless to refer the reader to the unforgettable lines of Dante, *Inferno*, xxviii., 103-11.

trothed lady, being assembled together, and grieving over the shame which Messer Buondelmonte had done to them, were filled with the accursed indignation, whereby the city of Florence was destroyed and divided. For many houses of the nobles swore together to bring shame upon the said Messer Buondelmonti, in revenge for these wrongs. And being in council among themselves, after what fashion they should punish him, whether by beating or killing, Mosca de' Lamberti said the evil word: 'Thing done has an end'; to wit, that he should be slain; and so it was done; for on the morning of Easter of the Resurrection, the Amidei of San Stefano assembled in their house, and the said Messer Buondelmonte coming from Oltramo, nobly arrayed in new white apparel, and upon a white palfrey, arriving at the foot of the Ponte Vecchio on this side, just at the foot of the pillar where was the statue of Mars, the said Messer Buondelmonte was dragged from his horse by Schiatto degli Uberti, and by Mosca Lamberti, and Lambertuccio degli Amidei, assaulted and smitten by Oderigi Fifanti, his veins were opened and he was brought to his end; and there was with him one of the Counts of Gangalandi. For the which thing the city rose in arms and tumult; and this death of Messer Buondelmonte was the cause and beginning of the accursed parties of Guelf and Ghibelline in Florence, albeit long before there were factions among the noble citizens, and the said parties existed by reason of the strifes and questions between the Church and the Empire; but by the reason of the death of the said Messer Buondelmonte, all the families of the nobles and the other citizens of Florence were divided, and some held with the Buondelmonti, who took the side of the Guelfs, and were its leaders, and some with the Uberti, who were the leaders of the Ghibellines, whence followed much evil and disaster

to our city, as hereafter shall be told; and it is believed that it will never have an end, if God do not cut it short. And surely it shows that the enemy of the human race, for the sins of the Florentines, had power in that idol of Mars, which the pagan Florentines of old were wont to worship, that at the foot of his statue such a murder was committed, whence so much evil followed to the city of Florence. . . ."[1]

At the eastern extremity of the Borgo of Montebuoni stands the Church of S. Pietro, built, as it is said, by the Buondelmonti themselves, but certainly keeping but little of the work of their time. Within is a charming fourteenth century picture of Madonna and Child.

Following the road to the left out of Montebuoni on the hillside, it is a distance of nearly two miles to the little church, by the way, of S. Martino a Bagnolo, Bagnolo dell' Impruneta, where of old the Gherardini were lords, and where the great *giureconsulto* Acursio was born. The church is small, and not very interesting, for it too has suffered every sort of restoration, yet it still keeps over the altar a picture of S. Martino, S. Niccolò, and S. Rocco, a fifteenth century work, and a fine Cross of the fourteenth century.

From Bagnolo it is but a step along that beautiful country road to the Impruneta, that scattered ragged village in the hills, gathered about a huge empty piazza, where on one side stands the shrine of Madonna.

The Impruneta is a *comunanza* of twelve small *borghi*,[2] really a great village on the hills about six

[1] Villani, *Cronica*, lib. v., cap. 38.

[2] So G. B. Casotti in his learned and invaluable work, *Memorie Istoriche della Miracolosa Immagine di Maria Vergine dell' Impruneta* (Firenze, 1714), P. i., p. 6. Carocci (*Il Comune del Galluzzo* (Firenze, 1892), p. 149), however, says he cannot trace these twelve *borghi*.

miles from Florence above Val di Greve. Very ancient in its foundation, its name to-day is a corruption from *in Pineta*, in the pine wood, and indeed it seems that long and long before Madonna came here, there was a shrine in the silence of the forest to *qualche falsa Deità*, as Casotti thinks, to some god certainly: would that it might prove to be Diana herself. We first meet with the name in a contract of a gift made on the 4th of November, 1040, by a certain Orlando, son of Goffredo, Canonico della Chiesa Fiorentina, to a *Spedale* founded for poor people and pilgrims, and if we may gather anything from names, Madonna, even so long ago, was specially worshipped here, for the place even then was called *Sancte Marie sito Pinita*. In another deed of gift, in 1069, we read *Impineto*, and later *de Pineta*, but the corruption of the name as we now know it, seems to have occurred in the thirteenth century, when we find *de Pineta* no longer, but *in Peneta*, and other variants, and at last *in Pruneta*, *in Pruneto*, *inter Pruneta*, and *in Prunetis*.[1]

Now, whether or no the place was sacred to our gods long and long ago, and indeed that seems likely enough, to judge by the treasures that were dug up here in the fifteenth century, when the present church was founded,[2] there seems certainly by 1046 to have been an oratory or a chapel here, whether in the place called *la Piazza* where the present church stands, or in the little wood above on the hill still called S. Mary's, we do not know. Certainly a church was built—a church or chapel—later on the site of the present

[1] Casotti, *op. cit.*, P. i., p. 9.

[2] Casotti (*op. cit.*) says many "idols" were found, and figures of serpents, coins and so forth, and a *fonte* too, still to be seen behind the wall of the *castello* towards the sacristy.

THE IMPRUNETA

building, which is indeed the third that has stood on that spot.[1]

All this territory was in the possession of the great family of Buondelmonti of Montebuono, and as we shall see they were among the earliest and certainly the greatest patrons of the shrine that soon spread the fame of Impruneta through all the Fiorentino. Of the two earlier churches doubtless built under Buondelmonti patronage, we know almost nothing; the present building is a work certainly of the fifteenth century, and it owes its being to Monsignore Antonio degli Agli, *Patrizio Fiorentino, Pievano e Benefattore Insigne di Questa Chiesa:* and restored though his church has been, in 1593 and in 1634, it is still for the most part a building of the fifteenth century.

Antonio degli Agli was Pievano here for thirty-eight years, from 1439 to 1477. Casotti says he was an excellent philosopher; he was, as we know, a Canonico, and later he became Decano della Metropolitana di Firenze, Archbishop of Raugia, Bishop of Fiesole, and finally Bishop of Volterra; moreover, Vespasiano da Bisticci thought him worthy to appear in his book, *Vite di Uomini Illustri.* His church, even to-day so strangely like a *castello,* was, Casotti says, built thus purposely for the sake of security, since it possessed so rare a treasure, and Padre Domenico, the fifteenth century Latin poet, seems to agree with him.[2]

[1] See Casotti, *op. cit.,* P. i., pp. 39, 42.

[2] There is a great number of Elogi, Laude, Sonetti and so forth to "S. Maria Impruneta," of which Padre Domenico's is so far as I know the earliest.

Sed melius munire volens Antonius illam
Ut cum plebe simul tutior ipse foret.
Dum rex aragonum populos Alphonsus ethruscos
Terreret magno nomine saepe suo:
Ut validam firmis precinxit turribus arcem.
Ne foris orta sibi bella nocere queant . . .

Within the "castello," which is 100 *braccia* wide and 150 long, are two cloisters, one very ancient, the other much more modern, the houses of the *Cappellani* and of the clergy who formed a college which served the church, the house of their *Capo* and the church itself. The façade of the church, which faces the Piazza, is beautiful, flanked as it is by two towers, all that are left of the four originally designed. The portico upheld by four columns and two pilasters, is an addition made by the *Venerabile Compagnia della Stimmate di S. Francesco in Firenze*, in 1634; their arms are over it, together with the following inscription, in the frieze, composed by Alessandro Adimari :—

REG : FERD : II M.D. MARIÆ PRECIBUS DEPULSA PESTE STYGMATUM D. FRANCISCI SOCIETAS DEIPARÆ LIBERATRICI AN : DNI CIↃIↃCXXXIIII.

Under this portico are the great doors, and over them the coats of the Buondelmonti with this inscription in Gothic characters :—

ARMA PATRONORUM ET DEFENSORUM ISTIVS PLEBIS.

Under the Buondelmonti coats are the arms of Leo X. placed there by the Cardinal-Archbishop Alessandro de' Medici in 1594.

Within, the church is of a single nave, made thus perhaps to hold the immense crowds that flocked to it, perhaps the greatest shrine of Madonna in Tuscany. Over the doors within the church is a very rude bas-relief, brought here probably from the old church.

he sings of the form of the church. Later, Ser Francesco d'Albizzolo made three *Laude per La Tavola di S. Maria Impruneta* in the vulgar tongue; others followed, among them Antonio Francesco Grazzini detto il Lasca with five *sonetti*, and Alessandro Adimari with a great *Ode*, all in due form for the Translation of the Image made on 21st May, 1633, *per impetrar soccorso nel presente Contagio*. He wrote another in 1649.

Three figures are carved there, each separated by a column which sustains the tabernacles in which they stand; and there is Madonna with a saint on either side.

Just within these doors to the left is the baptistery, with a font of the eighteenth century. The simple nave is broken by four altars, two on either side, additions it might seem of 1593 when the church was restored. Over these altars are four late pictures: the *Calling* of S. Peter and S. Andrew by Jacopo da Empoli; the Assumption of the Virgin by Cigoli; the Nativity of the Virgin by Passignano; and the Martyrdom of S. Lorenzo by Cristofano Allori. The two chapels at the end of the transepts are dedicated, that on the south to S. Maria Maddalena, that on the north to S. Sebastiano. Beneath the altar of the first is the marble tomb of Antonio degli Agli, the builder of the church. Over the tomb in a *tondo* in the wall is a relief of Madonna with our Lord in her arms, and on the front of the tomb the following inscription:—

D. O. M.
Antistes Templi iacet hac Antonius urna
Allius insignis moribus et genere.
Nobilis hic sibi vixit inops et dives egenis
Consilioque gravi profuit atque opera.
Dumque pius Pastor Volaterris aut Epidauri
Dogmate pavit oves non timuere Lupum
Vixit An LXXVII Mens X
Dieb. X.

In the chapel of S. Sebastiano in the north transept, where there is a statue of that saint by Rosselli, Manente de' Buondelmonti was buried in 1498. While over the high altar lately restored to its ancient simplicity stands the great polyptych painted in 1375 by the Florentines Pietro Nelli and Tommaso del Maza.

The two famous chapels, however, stand on either

side of the chancel arch, the one dedicated to the Holy Cross, and the other to Madonna. The chapel on the south, called of the Holy Cross because of the relic which it guards was of old called *del Santissimo*, "for it was destined for the use and custody of the Venerable Sacrament of the Body of Christ". The chapel itself is certainly the work of Michelozzo, while the very beautiful Tabernacle over the altar is almost certainly the work of Luca della Robbia, so like to Luca's Ciborium at Peretola, as to be almost unquestionably from his hand. On either side of the Tabernacle stand S. John Baptist and S. Augustine, the former as it might seem the work of Luca, the latter of his son Andrea. "Nothing could be stronger, freer in bearing, nobler in expression and gesture than this alert figure of the Baptist," says Miss Cruttwell, whose excellent book on the della Robbia I have referred to more than once already. "Nothing could be more finely modelled than his limbs, hands and feet, nothing more masterly than the simple treatment of the hair tunic on his broad chest and shoulders. The face is like that of S. James the Less among the *Pazzi* Apostles, but is even more concentrated and keen. The whole figure seems to vibrate with tense life and energy. In the lifeless statue opposite we have the same type of face, the same features, the same prominent cheek bones, the same arrangement of the beard. We have Luca's simple draperies, and this time, also, his massively constructed frame; but the expression of the face is weak and vacant, the hands flaccid and inert. . . . Evidently . . . we have in this S. Augustine Andrea working after the design of Luca.

"The *predella* below is by Luca himself, and is one of his most beautiful reliefs. If it should appear strange that while leaving parts apparently of more importance to his pupil, Luca should himself have executed the

Alinari

ALTAR-PIECE

By Luca and Andrea della Robbia, in the Capella della Croce S. Maria dell' Impruneta

subordinate part, it must be remembered that in its original state this *predella* with its shrine was the principal part and focus of the Tabernacle, the receptacle of the Holy Sacrament which the whole altar-piece was executed to enclose. . . .

"On either side of the small door of the shrine float four angels, those nearest in subdued adoration, those beyond with more animated gesture, as though beckoning others to come and worship."

Much of this is hidden from visitors by the tawdry ornaments of the altar, but if the dusty artificial flowers be put aside the beauty of the work will at once be seen, a beauty unsuspected behind those poor and vulgar candlesticks in the wretched light of the darkest corner of the church. The roof of the chapel, most lovely and charming, is also Luca's work, but the frieze which he certainly made for it is missing, the stucco reliefs we see to-day being part of the so-called "restoration" of 1650.[1]

The chapel, however, is no longer that of the Blessed Sacrament, but, as I have said, of the Holy Cross. It seems that Filippo degli Scolari, commonly called Pippo Espano, "*uomo veramente per fama immoriale*," Casotti tells us, gave the relic, a large piece of the True Cross. To guard this the Grand Duchess Maria Maddalena of Austria presented to the church a reliquary of silver in 1620. The pity of it is, however, not indeed that the church possesses such a relic, but that Luca's Tabernacle was destroyed for the sake of it. He built his Tabernacle, not for this relic at all, but for the Blessed Sacrament, and as a door for it, within the beautiful enamelled framework was set the Crucifixion, an enamelled relief by the master himself now in the adjoining chapel. This was removed, since

[1] Maud Cruttwell, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

it was not strong enough to resist thieves, and the horrible iron doors we see there to-day were substituted. This improvement seems to have been made in 1593[1] when the church was first restored. In turning now to the chapel on the north side of the chancel arch, the Chapel of Madonna, we come upon the secret, the hidden secret, of the whole church. Luca and Andrea della Robbia have worked there, Michelozzo too, and countless grey and golden heads have bowed in adoration of the Miraculous Image of Maria Vergine dell' Impruneta, which how few have ever seen. Yet it was for the sake of this *Immagine* the church was built.

The work, as it is said, of S. Luke himself, brought here, as the good Caostti suggests, by one of those holy men, S. Romolo, for instance, whom S. Peter sent into Tuscany, the picture was, as he presently goes on to assure us, adored long and long before there was a church here to hold it, in the woods themselves, that at that time covered this hillside; till suddenly, as it might seem, and whether it were the work of Madonna herself or of our great enemy we shall never know, suddenly the picture vanished and could not be found. Then in fear and great sorrow the people set about building a church to Mary our Hope. The story of this building is very quaintly and roughly told in the beginning of the *Libro de' Capitoli della Compagnia detta della Nostra Donna*—founded, Messer Stefano Pievano tells us, in 1340; but Casotti will not have it so, preferring *riformata* to *fondata*, for he thinks it an older affair than that.[2]

"The people of the district and village now called

[1] See p. 161. Miss Cruttwell thinks it was substituted in 1650, but the Grand Duchess had already given the silver reliquary in 1630. See Casotti, *op. cit.*, P. i., p. 35.

[2] Casotti, *op. cit.*, P. i., p. 43.

S. Maria dell' Impruneta," writes Messer Stefano,[1] "wished to build a temple with a baptismal font to the honour of the Divine Majesty and of our Blessed Lady the Glorious Virgin on the hill called after the name of S. Mary in the Piviere aforenamed: but to the surprise of every one it was always found that what was built by day was thrown to the ground by night.

"Therefore having recourse to God and to His Mother with much fasting and prayer, and also to the opinion of the wise prelates of the City of Florence, who are inspired by God, it was decided to build a *pieve*, where God Himself should please, and this was done by sending forth a pair of bullocks with a load of building stones on the aforesaid hill: the said bullocks, not fierce as is their wont, but docile, were sent by God without human guidance to the place where now is the very church and Pieve of S. Maria dell' Impruneta. Here where it was evident that the Lord had decided that the Church should be built in honour of His Mother, with admirable eagerness nobles and worthy people of every sort and condition set to work to quarry stone for that building. Their fervour was so great that they worked somewhat incautiously and without order, knowing nothing of the treasure that was preserved in that spot for the salvation of many.

"Suddenly while thus hewing away the stone there was heard a voice crying out, on which every one present was filled with fear and reverence, and the zeal of the workers was modified, and presently there was seen the very *tavola* of the picture of the glorious Virgin; already slightly chipped by the workers. When this was observed and the voice heard, all present were

[1] See Casotti, *op. cit.*, P. i., p. 44, where most of the document, very verbose and full of religious platitudes, is given.

filled with deepest reverence, and began to praise the mercy of God Who had shown by the course of the unguided bullocks. . . ."

This, it seems, was in 1340;[1] and already in 1354 those processions of the citizens of Florence in honour of this picture had begun. There was great drought in that year, and "the Florentines, fearing to lose the fruits of the earth, had recourse to Divine assistance, making prayers and continual processions through the city and through the *contado*. And the more processions they made, so much the more was the sky serene and full of stars by day, by night. The citizens, seeing that they got no help from these devotions, turned to our Lady and caused to be brought forth the ancient figure of our Lady painted in the tavola of S. Maria *in pianeta*, and on the ninth of the month of May of the said year (1354) prepared throughout the commune many tapers, and the clergy with all the Religious went in procession with the arm of Messer S. Filippo Apostolo and with the venerable Head of S. Zanobi and with many other Holy Relics, and almost all the people, men, women and children, with the *priori* and all the *signorie* of Florence, sounding the bells of the Commune and of the churches, praising God. And they went to meet the said Tavola outside the Gate of S. Piero Ghattolino. And those of the House of Buondelmonti, Padroni of the said Pieve, reverently with the men of the Piviere guarded and bore the said *tavola*. And when the bishop with the procession and with the relics and with the people met the Holy Picture, with great reverence and solemnity they conducted it to S. Giovanni and afterwards to San Miniato al Monte, and then replaced it in its ancient habitation at S. Maria *in pianeta*. . . ."

[1] Casotti, *op. cit.*, P. i., p. 45.

Whether that was the first of the processions which in time of need the people of Florence made in honour of the picture, I do not know. It was certainly not the last. In 1368 a procession was made in July because of too great rain; in 1383 *per cagione di mortalità e di gran pioggia*, again in 1384, and 1389, 1392, 1396 and 1400. Nor did the processions become less frequent; no less than forty-five taking place in the fifteenth century. After 1552, however, they became much less usual, but did not altogether cease till the year 1711.[1]

As we have seen, it was in the fifteenth century that the devotion of the people to S. Maria dell' Impruneta was at its height; and it was then that Michelozzo and the della Robbia were called in to decorate her shrine and the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament. Michelozzo was undoubtedly the architect not only of the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, now of Holy Cross, but also of the chapel of Madonna; and spoiled though his work has been in both, a discerning eye may even yet discover the beauty hidden there behind the vulgar modern work. The work of the della Robbia, the enamelled decoration, is nearly the same in both chapels. Here in the chapel of Madonna it consists of two statues supporting a marble tabernacle, a coffered roof, and a frieze outside the chapel. The Tabernacle itself might seem to be the work of Michelozzo;[2] below in the Predella, quite hidden by the late and heavy silver altar, is a relief telling the story of the finding of the holy image. "The relief," says Miss Cruttwell, who is almost alone in having seen it, "is so low that the finger scarcely feels a change of surface passing over it, but the perspective of the little

[1] For a full account of the last procession, see Casotti, *op. cit.*, P. i., p. 213 *et seq.*

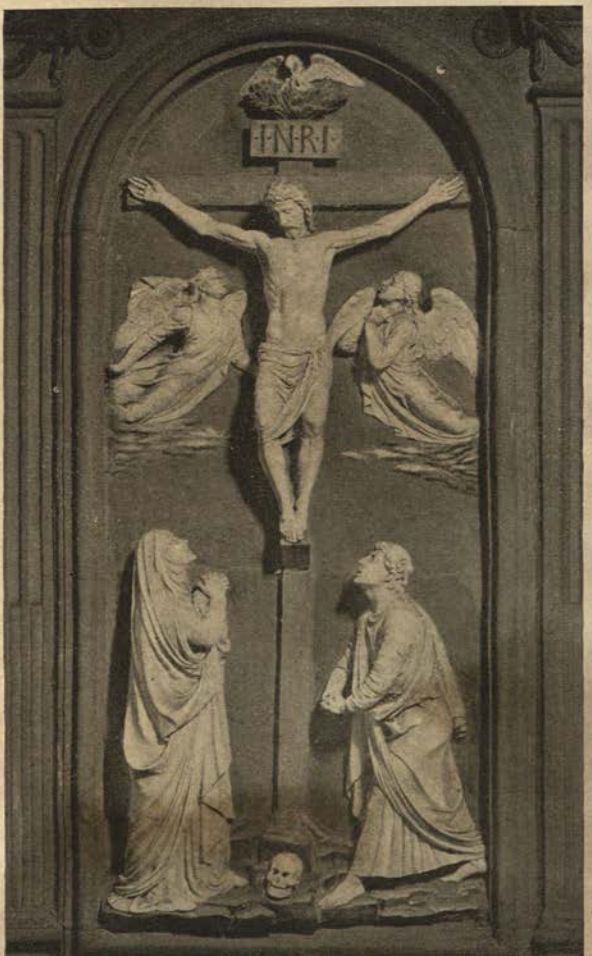
[2] *Cf.* Maud Cruttwell, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

building (intended to represent the Collegiata itself) and of the distant hills is so skilful that it seems like a delicate painting in grisaille. . . .

"On either side of the tabernacle stand the nearly life-sized figures of S. Paul and S. Luke, enamelled in pure white against a background of blue tiles designed to look like large irregularly-cut blocks of stone. The figures appear free standing statues, but are in reality attached to the background. Difficulty as to authorship at once begins, for never were two sculptures stylistically so alike, so dissimilar in feeling—one figure so noble, so splendidly posed, so free in expression and gesture, the other so feeble, so ill-balanced, so lacking in dignity. That the S. Luke (to the right of the tabernacle) is by Luca himself there can be no possible doubt. . . . It is indeed one of his noblest enamelled terra-cottas and has the classic grandeur of the S. Andrea of the Pazzi Atrium. On the other side is S. Paul, alike in external feature and drapery to Luca's work, yet failing in every respect to attain the same quality. . . ."

It is here within this sumptuous and beautiful work, ever guarded by S. Luke, her historian, and S. Paul, her defender, that Madonna dell' Impruneta waits. For within the marble tabernacle is a tabernacle of wood painted both within and without on a gold ground with two choirs of angels. Without, it is divided into six compartments: in the two above is the Mystery of the Annunciation; in the two in the middle, S. Zanobi and another; and in two below, S. Giovanni Battista and S. Cristofano.[1] Within, is the *Immagine*, that Tavola where is painted the great Mother of God.

[1] Needless to say, I have not seen this casquet. The description is Casotti's (*op. cit.*, P. i., p. 37). The picture seems never to have been uncovered in public; it was borne in procession in this casquet.



Alinari

THE CRUCIFIXION
By Luca della Robbia in the Church of S. Maria dell' Impruneta

Few nowadays come to visit Madonna of the Impruneta, few even to see the work of Luça della Robbia, of Andrea his son, and of the great Michelozzo, the favourite architect of Cosimo de' Medici. To-day it is not the glory of the Blessed Virgin that brings the *contadini* and the people of Florence to these beautiful hills, but the great fair held every year on the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday in the octave of S. Luke, of which Callot made his famous engraving.

The road back to Florence leaves the great Piazza of Impruneta to the south-west. Passing across the hills where the olives smile so discreetly and laugh aloud for joy on a day of wind, turning to silver in the sunshine, in something less than a mile you come to Montecchio, a little village of great antiquity once in the power of the Buondelmonti, whom it has survived. The Church of S. Pietro that has stood there certainly since the twelfth century is a daughter of the Pieve of Impruneta. Thence, still passing over the hills above the torrent of Luciana on the north, and ignoring the ways that leave the highway to the right, in another mile you come to Quintole with its church of S. Miniato which has certain remains of beautiful frescoes and, best of all, keeps still its ancient altar-piece, now in the choir, where we see a Virgin enthroned with our Lord on her knees and beside her S. Catherine of Alexandria, S. Miniato, S. Giovanni Evangelista and S. Leonardo, and beneath two angels who sound trumpets "to accompany the hymns of the saints". Who painted this marvellous and exquisite work I do not know, but it is of the school of Lorenzo Monaco.

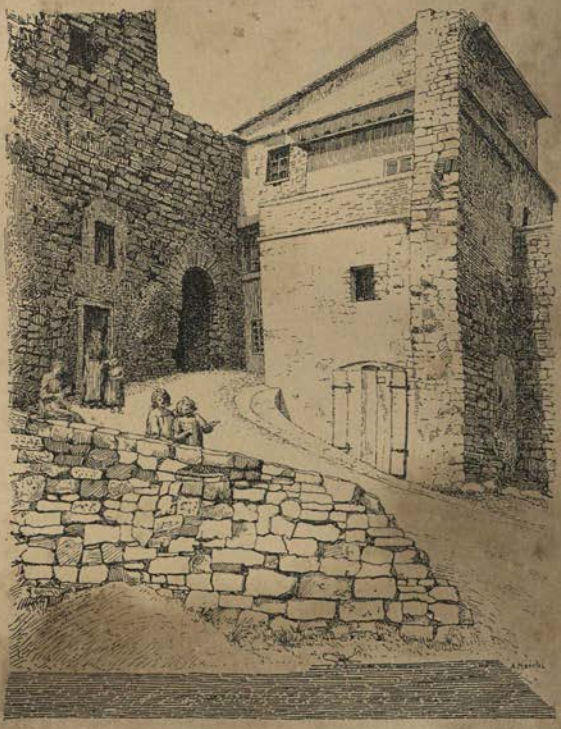
Another mile on the road to Florence we come to Riboja, a villa once belonging to the Giovanni; a

chapel close by still keeps a fourteenth century picture of the marriage of S. Catherine.

If you continue on your way in another mile and a half you will find yourself on the Via Romana; but there is a road through the vineyard, a rough country way, from Riboja, which leaves the highway on the left, and following it presently in some half a mile you find another country road running across it. Turning again to the right here in about a quarter of a mile you come to the Church of S. Lorenzo alle Rose. It is as old as the thirteenth century and still possesses a little Giottesque picture representing Madonna with our Lord, while over the high altar is an Annunciation in the manner of Ridolfo Ghirlandajo.

Passing this church, in another quarter of a mile where this by-way joins the highway we left at Riboja, is the great villa of the Antinori, perhaps the most beautiful palace in all this valley Messer Niccolò di Tommaso Antinori in 1487 bought the place called now, as long ago, *Le Rose* from Madonna Elisabetta, the widow of Antonio de Rossi, whose family had great possessions hereabouts. And it was for the new owners that Giovanni della Robbia carved and painted the beautiful lunette of the Resurrection which used to stand within, over the garden gate of the villa, where some one had blazoned too the coat of the Antinori family. These beautiful things are there no longer. Far away in Brooklyn they are fading in the destroying air of the New World. In truth, who could imagine such things in the iron houses, steam-heated too, that have already been the ruin of I know not how many Italian pictures, those paintings on wood, which will not stay even for one winter in so artificial a world.

So following the road to the left you come to Via Romana and the tramway, and so back to Florence;



OLD HOUSES NEAR IMPRUNETA

but perhaps if you walk, or if, taking the tram, you forsake it for the road at Le Due Strade, you may care to see one more splendour before returning to the ways of the city,—I mean S. Maria alle Campora.

Just before you come to Le Due Strade, on your way into Florence, a road leaves Via Romana suddenly on the left, and curving downhill leads you in less than a quarter of a mile to a little highway where you turn to the right, and so in a hundred yards or so come to the great villa and the Church of S. Mary, which is to-day only a fragment, just the Chapel of the Benini Formichi. Founded in 1368 by Messer Fra Bartolommeo di Bindi Benini, Prior, Carocci tells us, of the *Ordine Gerosolimitano*, there yet remain here frescoes of that time "of the school of the Gaddi," on the walls and the arch. Among those precious fragments of which, as we have seen, so many are scattered on the hills here, these frescoes are not the least precious among those precious things which lend to any walk in the Florentine country that I have so loved something of the rareness of a vision, the joy of coming upon some exquisite thing suddenly by the wayside.

X

TO COMPIOBBI, MONTACUTO, VILLAMAGNA, THE INCONTRO, MIRANSÙ, ROSANO, AND PONTASSIEVE [1]

THERE are many ways from Florence to the Incontro, where, as it is said, though I can find nothing concerning it, S. Francis met S. Dominic on his way to Rome, and of these, two pass through the valley on either side of the Arno, while another passing through Bagno a Ripoli begins to climb the great hill at Paterno. That is a good way, too, which starts from Settignano and following along the by-ways, through Terenzano to Compiobbi, crosses the river there in the ferry and climbs the hill at last through Montacuto and Villamagna. And it is by this way that I always choose to go, because it is one of the fairest ways in Tuscany.

[1] This is rather a long walk, and will fill a whole day. It can be shortened by taking the train from Florence to Compiobbi. As with the other walks, it can be driven easily enough; but in that case the way to Compiobbi should be that which leaves the city by the Barriera di S. Niccolò and follows the river. The road from Compiobbi is uphill all the way to Villamagna, where the carriage may well be left, and the hill to the Incontro, a walk of some three-quarters of an hour, climbed on foot, returning to Villamagna. The road thence to Miransù after the first half-mile is fairly level, after which there is a steep descent into Rosano. The road from Rosano to Florence is good and level.

Leaving the tram in the little Piazza at Settignano and passing up the village street, you take the second way to the right, Via del Crocifisso in alto, and presently along that undulating road, after passing the first group of houses, not without turning to look at Settignano on her hill, you come in sight of the great Gamberaja villa, with its marvellous cypresses and hedges of pink roses, those "twice blossoming roses of Paestum" of which Virgil speaks.

> Atque equidem, extremo ni jam sub fine laborum
> Vela traham, et terris festinem advertere proram;
> Forsitan et, pingues hortos quae cura colendi
> Ornaret, canerem, biferique rosaria Paesti.

Villa Gamberaja is a building of the seventeenth century. Its architect is unknown, and indeed its history is altogether rather obscure. It seems to have been built for Zanobi Lapi, as an inscription over a door in the entrance hall tells us *Zenobius Lapius Fundavit* MDCX.[1]

The little house close by along the road on the right is said to have been the birthplace of the two sculptors Antonio and Bernardo Rossellino, whose family name was Gamberelli, but certainly Villa Gamberaja has no connection with them.

"Popular tradition," says Mrs. Ross, "which is all we have to depend on, declares that several rills and springs of water formed a small lake or pond near by, where the country folk used to catch crayfish (*gamberi*), hence the name Gamberaja, the abode of crayfish."

Passing under the magnificent cypress walk of the villa and round about the old ilex grove that guards it on the north, you come in a little while to the top of the hill, where an ancient shrine, *Il Crocifisso in alto*, still watches over the city, beautiful, far away in

[1] See Janet Ross, *Florentine Villas* (Dent, 1904), p. 117.

the plain. Turning here sharply to the left along the road to Terenzano,[1] keep straight on, winding to left or right as the road goes, refusing alike the ways to the valley and the ways to the hills, till once past Terenzano and its church, where the frescoes are fading behind the altar, in about a mile the road dips suddenly and passing under the railway joins Via Aretina. All along that by-way among the olives the beautiful vista of Val d'Arno has opened before you with the hill of the Incontro, across the river, Montacuto, that *castello* on the hill-top under it, while, far away in the valley, Arno, between gold and green, breaks over the weir at Compiobbi.

Having won to Via Aretina, you follow it quite through Compiobbi with its dusty cypresses, till, on the right hand, you come to the ferry between the weirs. Crossing the river here, on the southern bank you ignore the by-way, passing straight to the highroad, which you follow to the right, turning later sharply up a steep road to the left past some houses beside the main road. In three hundred yards the road divides, and here you take the left branch, which, winding about and about, presently climbs a steep hill on the way to Montacuto. And as you follow that winding way ever higher, a marvellous view gradually opens before you, of the great hills to the east over Val d'Arno, while far and far away northward between the hills the Convent of Monte Senario rises up like some enormous shrine among the mountains. So by-and-by on that beautiful road you come to the Castello of Montacuto.

Montacuto, like so many other places of the same name in Italy—in Tuscany alone there are some sixteen of them—gets its name from its shape, for it stands

[1] This is the road for a mile which we have traversed in the opposite direction in chapter ii., p. 40.

up like a great pyramid out of the valley. Repetti for once is almost silent about it, but Carocci tells us that there was a Rocca here from very ancient times, adding that what with the steepness of its hillside and the want of roads it was one of the most powerful of the minor fortresses held by those potent families whom Florence had to tame. In those days its lords were the Compiobbesi, from whom, it seems, the little town in the valley gets its name of Compiobbi. Consistently Ghibelline the Compiobbesi, like the rest of that faction here in the Fiorentino, fell, and their castle was confiscated, though a branch of the family became Guelf, maybe for the sake of their possessions, maybe from personal hate; yet they were compelled to live in Florence. So the Rocca of Montacuto, like so many other fortresses on these hills, became a villa. In the early part of the fifteenth century the Salviati held it, in the late sixteenth century it came into the hands of the Acciajuoli, passing in the seventeenth century by marriage to the Guadagni, and from them in payment of debt in the eighteenth century to Pier Maria Spagni, till later the Marchesi Tolomei Baldovinetti bought it. And it is the descendant of this family, Conte Blasi Foglietti, who holds it to-day. Consisting, as it does now, of a splendid towered villa with its dependencies and a chapel, S. Jacopo, it would have merely a picturesque interest for us, but that the chapel was originally the Church of the Castello, and there you may still find over the altar a beautiful work by some pupil of Verrocchio, perhaps Lorenzo di Credi himself, of Madonna adoring her little Son with S. Giuseppe beside her.

From Montacuto the road winds upwards towards Villamagna. Just above the Castello, by a red towered villa, a most lovely view of Val d'Arno opens toward Florence with the city in the plain, and beyond

and beyond the peaks of the Apuan Alps, the Monti Pisani, and northward the Carrara hills. Then as you follow the road at a group of poor houses across the way, you turn to the right, and in about half a mile come to the Church of S. Romolo, just beneath the highway. Here, over an altar, against the north wall stands one of the fairest Byzantine pictures I have ever found in Italy, a Madonna with her little Son.

It is but a mile from S. Romolo to the village of Villamagna. Nothing ever seems to have happened at Villamagna, nestling now on its hillside among its cherry-trees and olives, and indeed our interest in it, save that it is beautiful, is confined to its churches, the Pieve of S. Donnino and the Oratorio of S. Gherardo.

S. Donnino is very ancient, founded indeed in 1067, but it is the work of the Renaissance that we find there rather than the church itself that calls us to stop on the way. For over the altar at the eastern end of the north aisle is a Virgin enthroned between four saints, S. Sebastian, S. John Baptist, with two others, painted in the manner of Domenico Ghirlandajo: while at the top of the south aisle where the arches are still stained with frescoes, is a later picture of Madonna, not so lovely. Again, there is a fresco of the Presepio with saints and a bishop; and then in the north aisle there is a magnificent triptych perhaps by Agnolo Gaddi, painted on gold, Madonna enthroned surrounded by many saints, and in the *gradino* a Pietà between six little figures of saints.

Not far from S. Donnino is the little Oratorio of S. Gherardo, which possesses a small picture of the late fifteenth century of Madonna enthroned with her Son in her arms between S. Donnino and S. Gherardo; while beneath the altar S. Gherardo himself lies buried.

S. Gherardo da Villamagna, a hermit, was a *Cavalier-*

servente of the Holy and most Eminent Military Religion of Jerusalem, now called of Malta, and a Tertiary of the Seraphic Order of S. Francis. Here truly among the cherry-trees we may well rest awhile in this high and beautiful place and consider his story, for indeed it deserves to be known.

Villamagna, as one may easily see, for the ruins remain, was once a castello, in the hands of that noble family dei Bartoli Filippi. Not far away, at a place called La Casellina, S. Gherardo was born about the year 1174. His parents were labourers, *Lavoratori de' terreni*, in the service of the Signori Folchi, but when he was twelve years old he lost them both by the plague. Yet though his earthly father thus deserted him his Heavenly still held his hand, putting into the heart of Federigo Folchi, Knight of the Holy and Military Order of Jerusalem, that he should take care of him; and so it happened, for Signor Federigo took him to Florence, and there in his own house had him instructed in *buone arti* and *buoni costumi*, as though he had been his own son. So he grew up, and presently was put in command of all his patron's house, teaching others what he had learned, and ruling there.

About this time one of the Folchi was about to set out for the Holy Land, and as it happened he invited Gherardo to go along with him, which he agreed to do very gladly, for indeed he had long wished to visit those Holy Places and especially Jerusalem, for already the dream of his life had fallen upon him. So they set out. After many adventures that good knight with his companions was taken by the Saracens at last and sold into slavery. Yet by the goodness of God after a time they were enabled to escape. Then they made pilgrimage to the Holy Places, and presently as God willed they returned safely to Villamagna.

Now, by-and-by, fired by this tale, another young

lord of the same stock would set out for Palestine, and nothing would do but that Gherardo should go with him: and he, when he heard it, consented gladly. So they went on their way. And it befell when they were well away that they encountered a Turkish ship greater far than their own, nor could they escape any way, for she bore down upon them. Then Gherardo, while they fought, prayed in the stern, and, as it proved, his prayers were stronger than the strength of the Infidel, for after a time the Turk drew off, and it was seen that more than fifty of his company were dead and more than seventy taken for slaves, such was the goodness of God, while but two Christians were killed and none captured. Then they came to our Gherardo, and low-born though he was, they gave him the Habit and the Cross of a Frate Cavalier-servente of the Holy and Military Religion of Jerusalem, now called of Malta. And he received the Rule and kept it; when they were come ashore, assisting pilgrims and visiting the sick in the *Speda'i* and praying daily for the affairs of the Religion, so that, as his biographer tells us, *molti progressi fecero contro degl' Infedeli I Cavalieri.* He remained in Syria for seven years in the service of the Religion, in which time he often visited the Holy Places, for he loved them. But at last he felt called upon to lead a more rigorous and a holier life, so obtaining leave from his Superior he returned to his fatherland, saving the ship in which he sailed from shipwreck on the voyage by his prayers, and bringing her at last safe and sound into the Tuscan sea.

Now it happened as he came homeward that passing through Florence and stopping to see his friends he met S. Francesco there (it was the year 1219), who seeing what manner of man he was gave him the Habit of his Third Order, which he had just instituted. In this new Habit, over which he wore the White Cross

of the Knights of Malta, he returned to Villamagna, and there in a little hut began to live the life of a hermit and a solitary, inviting the country-folk by his example as well as with words to repentance. In his solitude he beat himself so sore that surely, as his biographer tells us, "it was a wonder human nature could stand it". Some called him an angel come to Earth, others a new Antony, and others again a modern Ilarione. He fled conversation, especially that of women. He would visit the neighbouring churches, all of them far off, crawling the whole way on his knees, to S. Romola, for instance, to S. Bartolommeo della Quercia and S. Lorenzo a Vecchia. And this would have been impossible had not God, as his biographer assures us, hardened his knees, on which there grew great corns, which Brocchi[1] tells us he saw when about 1751 the coffin of San Gherardo was opened. At last, however, in spite of himself his fame got abroad, a great crowd of women and men and boys and children would follow him to ask for his prayers, and he taught them and comforted them in their misfortunes. And he healed the sick too, and when a child at Monte Albano[2] fell from a great height and was brought to him for dead he covered him with his handkerchief and on the following day restored him healed and well to his parents. Then one January he fell ill himself and was like to starve, but God made a cherry-tree close to his hut to bear fruit, his widowed sister bringing the cherries to him; but when she returned to gather some for herself she found the tree bare. So it is always with a branch

[1] Brocchi is his biographer. See *Vite de' Santi e Beati Fiorentini, scritte dal Dottor Giuseppe Maria Brocchi, Protonotario Apostolico Sacerdote e Accademico Fiorentino ed Etrusco* (in Firenze, MDCCLII.), tom i., parte ii., p. 258. A most delightful book written by one of the most simple and charming of Tuscan writers in the eighteenth century.

[2] Near Rovezzano.

laden with cherries that the painters show him to us, for that miraculous fruit healed him.

Beside the gift of healing, Gherardo had also the gift of prophecy. Seeing a lady one day leaving the confessional, he knew she had made a bad confession, and presently told her of a sin which for ten years she had hidden for shame: then he bade her return to the priest. And other things he knew more wonderful still, such as that which he foretold to the *Mulattiere*, to wit, that he would presently be drowned in Arno if he did not mend his ways, which surely happened. He also prophesied the suffering of the Church from Federico II., and the scandals, wars, burnings, and sacrileges throughout Italy which lasted till the death of that Anti-Christ. Like S. Francesco too he tamed a wolf: for one day, returning from visiting some sick person in the company of a certain Luca del Pesca he met a wolf carrying away in its mouth a hen which belonged to a poor man of Villamagna, so he bade it return and render it again, and so it was.

When he came to die being sick he was in the care of a Benedictine monk who had once been his confessor to whom he foretold the very day he would die, which happened on 13th May, 1242. Thus lived and thus died this Knight of Malta and Tertiary of the Order of S. Francis in the thirteenth century. His oratory remained under the Rule of the Knights till the Grand Dukes, as it is said, gave it into the custody of the Pievano of Villamagna.

The way to the Incontro, that convent of Franciscans on the hill-top, some fifteen hundred feet above the sea, where, as it is said, S. Gherardo built a little hut of stones and where in the beginning of the eighteenth century the Franciscans built a convent, is steep. And truly since the convent is modern there is but little to

see there, and though the view is very wide and splendid, it is not more lovely I think than that you see from Villamagna, therefore, if already you be a little weary, it will be well to go straight to Miransù. If, however, you go to the Incontro you will return to Poggio a Luco, that hill-top just behind S. Donnino di Villamagna, where there is now a great villa and where once the Bartoli Filippi, as I have said, had their Fortezza.

From S. Gherardo the road to the Incontro lies straight uphill till where the road forks you turn to the right, and at the next fork to the right again, and so winding through the woods, you come into the great Via Crucis that leads you to the convent gate. In all it is some forty minutes' walk from S. Gherardo.

The way to Miransù from S. Gherardo is the same so far as the first fork, where you take the road to the left, coming in two hundred yards to Poggio a Luco, from which you descend slowly and with many windings in something under an hour, keeping always to the left, to Miransù itself. And truly by this road who would wish to climb mountains, for after passing Poggio a Luco the world is so beautiful all the way that nothing could better it—those great wine-coloured hills of Vallombrosa, like vast precious stones, and yet softer than the bloom on the grapes, a miracle of glory.

The little village of Miransù hidden away in a fold of the valley is one of the most charming of hill villages. It consists of some three or four houses, a big church, ancient too, and an old scarred tower once a small fortress of the Lords of Quona; and as Messer Lapo da Castiglionchio wrote to his son Bernardo, it was sold by one of his ancestors, of the house of Tedaldo da Quona, to the Galli of Florence. The church, which is certainly as old as the year 1066, once had Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici for patron, he who was afterwards Leo X. To-day, deserted though it be by any such

splendours, it still possesses marvellous things, only the Pievano, charming though he be and like the majority of Tuscan village priests, a good fellow at heart, has thought and dreamed so long of his treasures that in mortal fear of robbers he is likely to refuse you admittance unless you can persuade him.

I shall not easily forget the day I came there. It was already afternoon, and, a little tired in the sun, I rang at the canonica bell in good hope of a rest in the cool church and perhaps a cup of wine, for I knew the vintage of Miransù of old.

Presently, as I waited, a little round window beside the door opened, and a girl, pretty as an angel—a dark angel truly—demanded who I was and what I wished.

"To see the church," said I—"that is, if it does not incommode the Signorina."

She said softly, "I will bring my brother".

Again I waited in the sun, till presently the round look-out was opened again and a young priest looked at me and again demanded my business.

"Can one, then, see your church?" said I. "It is for that I am come."

"Ah," said he smiling subtly and looking me up and down. "Ah, that will be impossible."

"Impossible," said I in my hasty English way, for I knew what the church held; "not at all impossible, Signor Padre—here is the church, here am I and there are you. Eccolo!"

"Signore," said he still regarding me, "these are sad days, robbers and rascals are everywhere. For yourself, of course, you are a *galant'uomo*, but . . . in short, Signore, you cannot see the church."

"Signor Padre," said I, "I am a poor man, I could not buy your pictures even if I would—and believe me I would not if I could. I am nothing in this whole world but a poor devil of a writer. Your church holds

many precious things, why then, being what I am, should I not see them?"

He smiled and smiled, but came not 'to the door. "It will be impossible," said he.

"Can it be," said I, looking over his shoulder past him at a shadow in the background, "can it be that a holy priest will refuse a poor man the shadow of his church? *Che, che,* then indeed all they told me was true, there are no more Christians in Tuscany."

"Signore," said he, "there are many robbers——" but some one pulled at his cassock.

"Signor Padre," said I, "do robbers ring at the bell and beseech admittance, or come in some other way?"

And again some one pulled at his cassock and I heard a whisper.

"No, no," said he quickly. "I have made the rule. It is impossible."

"Signore," said I, "have the politeness to listen to me. I am not angry with you, but I am going to tell you the truth. It is true you are priest of this church and *pievano* of this pieve, but as guardian of the pictures I would see, which, though I am sorry for it, are the property of the State, you are the servant of Italy whose guest I am. Suppose I go back to Florence and tell the Signor Ricci—ah, you know him—that you here with your beautiful things wish to keep them all to yourself, how long do you think it will be before they are in the Uffizi Gallery, dead on the wall there in Florence? If you are so afraid to lose them I had better——"

He came to the door and opened it. "Come in," said he. "You are *Inglese,* and your nation has the gift of obstinacy, who shall deny you anything without weariness? Enter. See what you will. Well, I myself will guide you."

Donna Giulia, his sister, was all cheerfulness. So we went in together.

Now these are the treasures I had fought so hard to see. An ancient triptych, divided now, of Madonna and Child, S. Lorenzo and S. Niccolò di Bari, painted in gold in the manner of Lorenzo di Bicci. Then over an altar on the north side of the church a magnificent picture of the Crucifixion amid a host of saints, among them the Blessed Virgin, S. Maria Maddalena, S. Giovanni Evangelista, and S. Giovanni Battista; while in the *gradino* are five *tondi* filled with the half-length figures of saints. It is a marvellous and lovely work of the end of the fourteenth century, perhaps by Agnolo Gaddi, painted on gold. When I had looked my fill, they led me into their house and gave me a cup of their black wine, and we were friends. Then Donna Giulia, who I believe thought well of me, bethought her of another treasure and ran swiftly to fetch it. Presently she laid in my hands a magnificent bronze Crucifix of Byzantine work, marvellously carved, on one side in outline, and with our Lord hanging on the Cross, a work in full relief, on the other.

When I had thanked them again, I went on my way.

The road to Rosano falls all the way from Miransù towards the valley. It is not easy to mistake it. You go through the wooded valley on the hillside, and ever before you Vallombrosa shines like some strange jewel in the sun. Presently, on your right, you pass the Castello of Castiglionchio. It was here lived that Lapo da Castiglionchio, the famous humanist, whom Petrarch met in Boccaccio's house. "Whom has our State ever produced," Coluccio Salutati wrote of him, "more diligent in pursuit of our studies and of those which pertain to eloquence? Which of the poets was unknown to him, nay, rather, which of them was not a

hackneyed writer to him? Who was better versed in the works of Cicero? Who more abundant in gleanings from history? Who more deeply imbued with the precepts of moral philosophy? *Dio Mio!* How he abounded in sweetness and in weightiness of discourse; how ready he was in dictation or in setting himself to the task of writing."[1]

There is little or nothing to see at Castiglionchio, and Rosano is still far. In some two miles, at San Prugnano, the road forks, you follow the way to the right round the church, where there is now nothing to see, all its treasures having been carried away to SS. Annunziata in Rosano.

Once past San Prugnano the road drops swiftly into the plain, bringing you in some twenty minutes to Rosano itself.

The Church of SS. Annunziata at Rosano belonged of old to a convent of Benedictine nuns built beside it. Founded, if we may believe the inscription still to be read over the door of the church, in 780, restored in 1523, the first time we find it mentioned is in a manuscript, 1015. The patrons of the convent were the Conti Guidi, Conte Guido dei Guidi giving the Abbess Berta many privileges in 1055. In 1068, however, Conte Guido, son of the above with Contessa Emmellina his wife, was in Rosano when he renounced his rights in favour of the Monastery of Vallombrosa.

SS. Annunziata to-day, however, is a parish church, and possesses not only its own treasures, such as they are, but also the pictures, perhaps more precious from San Prugnano. There, behind the high altar, we find a beautiful triptych, painted in gold, an Annunciation in the midst, and on either side two saints, while

[1] *Cf.* also Vespasiano da Bisticci, *Vite di Uomini Illustri* (Firenze, 1859), p. 509.

another painting, on gold too, is also of the Annunciation.

From Rosano it is but a step to the river and the ferry. Once on the northern shore it is a walk of nearly three-quarters of a mile, keeping to the right, upstream into Pontassieve, where truly there is little or nothing to see, the tower of Filicaja, held by the old family of that name, the bridge over the Sieve built by the famous Bartolommeo Ammannato in 1555, when the ancient bridge was washed away, as you may read if you will in the inscription there.

COSM. MED. FLOR. REIP. DUX. II.
HUNC PONTEM AB INGENTI AQUARUM INUNDATIONE
MAGNA CUM LABE FUNDITUS EVERSUM RIFICIENDUM
CURAVIT ANNO DOM. MDLV.

And so by train to Florence.

XI

S. MARIA A CASTAGNOLO, CASTEL PULCI, S. MARTINO ALLA PALMA, MOSCIANO, S. MARIA A SCANDICCI, S. BARTOLO IN TUTO, S. GIUSTO A SIGNANO, LEGNAJA [1]

IT is about an hour's ride in the tram from Mercato Nuovo to Ponte di Stagno on the way to Signa. The way lies out of Porta S. Frediano across the plain of Florence under the hills where, after passing Caselina, S. Martino alla Palma first comes in sight, just a tower on the hillside, and then the great villa of Castel Pulci at the end of its long avenues in the midst of its gardens. You are free at last when the tram stops at the foot of a little bridge over the Vignone, Ponte di Stagno they call it, though Stagno is nearly a mile away to the south. Lingering there till the tram has lumbered out of sight and hearing, you wait beside a beautiful shrine of Madonna at the eastern end of the bridge, where Neri di Bicci painted, in 1453,

[1] Instead of going as described by tramway from Florence to Ponte di Stagno, it is less tedious to go to Signa by train and to walk thence through Lastra back along Via Pisana to S. Maria a Castagnolo, though it adds about two miles to the walk. In driving you would go straight to S. Maria a Castagnolo along Via Pisana from Florence, then return to Via Pisana and continue back along it for a mile and a half when a road turns up on the right to S. Martino. After S. Martino the route given in the text may be followed.

for Luca d'Andrea di S. Columbano, all this wayside shrine, a chapel almost, where Madonna with our Lord in her arms waits to bless us, between S. Luke and S. John Baptist, S. Anthony and S. Andrew, herself blessed the while by the Eternal Father hovering there amid the cherubim.

From this shrine it is but a little way to S. Maria a Castagnolo. For crossing the bridge and taking the first road to the left, you come to the church almost at once, set on a little platform above the way, among trees and vineyards.

Like so many of the churches in this part of the Fiorentino, S. Maria a Castagnolo was under the patronage of the Conti Cadolinghi, those powerful nobles who founded the Badia a Settimo, and indeed there was a church here certainly as early as 1037. Nothing, however, remains from that time, the interest of the church to-day lying in a bas-relief of della Robbia ware of the fifteenth century, and in a beautiful triptych of the end of the fourteenth century, scattered once, but now gathered together behind the high altar, Madonna giving her girdle to S. Thomas, while on either side stand S. Augustine and S. Andrew, S. John Baptist and S. Antony. And this picture reminds us that in Tuscany every church which is called and spoken of simply as S. Maria is dedicated indeed to S. Maria Assunta. Thus the cathedrals of Pisa and Siena are dedicated to Madonna Assunta. The Feast of the Assumption throughout Central Italy[1] is indeed one of the great festivals in the year. On that day in old times Pisa ran her Palii

[1] Many writers and travellers seem to imagine that Siena is alone in the honour she gives to S. Maria Assunta. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Not only in all Tuscany but throughout Umbria is that day held in the highest honour *Cf. Florence and Northern Tuscany* (Methuen, 1907), pp. 90-93.

and rowed them too, lit her bonfires and girdled her cathedral with gold and silver and precious stones; on that day even now in Umbria and in Tuscany every village has its bonfire, every cottage its taper; while in Siena they run the Palio of August, and on the top of Mont' Amiata the great beacon flames, not in honour of any earthly lord, but to the glory of her who is our Life, our Sweetness and our Hope.

From S. Maria a Castagnolo we set out through the vineyards for S. Martino alla Palma on the hills. From the platform before the church we descend once more to the lane by which we came from Ponte di Stagno, and following it straight uphill presently come to a group of houses with a church, S. Ilario alla Capannuccia, keeping here to the right and then crossing a road that runs north and south past the church we continue on our way, in a few minutes crossing a little stream. Continuing thus uphill, presently a farm-road to the left leaves the lane by which we have come. Following this between the vines in a few minutes we come to a house which we pass, leaving it on our right; then turning sharply to the right we follow a road under a white vineyard wall, the wall of a terrace of vines. This road, bad at best, presently becomes a path, it swerves sharply right and left through the vineyards; and then just past some *contadini* houses we turn to the right into another road above a farm-house on the hilltop called Monte Cacioli,[1] in ancient times a fortress of the Conti Cadolinghi of Fucecchio. Here Conte Lottario and his mother Contessa Gemma held court in 1006, and, as it is said, gave large gifts to the Badia a Settimo. Their descendant Ugo joined Roberto Tedesco, Vicar

[1] See Janet Ross, *Florentine Villas* (Dent, 1904), p. 128.

of Tuscany under Henry III., against the Florentines, who marched out and, storming Monte Cacioli, killed him.

Following the road to the right in another half-mile you find yourself just above Castel Pulci, the great villa that is such a land-mark from the Via Pisana. Long and long before Luigi Pulci was to make the name immortal, the Pulci owned very large possessions in Val d'Arno. The first record we have of them dates[1] from 1278, when Jacopo di Rinaldi Pulci was denounced to the Captain of the Guelfs in Florence for failing to keep the *pescaja* near Ponte a Signa in proper repair. His son Mainetto sold this *pescaja* to the monks of Badia a Settimo, who in 1313 bought an island in the river from Giovanni and Ponzardo Pulci, the sons of Mainetto. In 1321 the family failed, their lands and houses, together with this villa, passing to Cardinal Napoleone Orsini, one of their creditors. His heirs sold the place to the Marchese Rinuccini, and so it was not here, but in Florence, that Luigi, the author of the *Morgante* called *Maggiore*, was born on the Feast of the Assumption in 1432.

After leaving Castel Pulci, at the first fork, keep to the right downhill till, coming into the high road, you follow to the left, turning in a few yards uphill to the right, when, after a steep climb, you find yourself in front of the church of S. Martino alla Palma.

S. Martino alla Palma stands on the summit of a group of hills called Romola. From the platform, the portico that half surrounds the church, you may see all the Florentine plain from Signa and Prato to Monte Morello and Florence herself, where the hills close her in, and in the midst of this ample valley, far and far below you, you may spy out Badia a Settimo.

[1] Repetti, *op. cit.*, vol. i., p. 508.

S. MARTINO ALLA PALMA

It was in the tenth century that S. Martino alla Palma was founded, perhaps by the Cadolinghi; and certainly at that time it was under their patronage. Not for long, however, for it was one of these, perhaps Marchese Bonifazio, who gave the church with that of S. Donato a Lucardo and other lands to the monastery there in the plain, Badia a Settimo. In 988 the gift was confirmed by Conte Adimaro, his son, and later by the Emperor Henry I. in a diploma dated 1015, and finally by the Pope, Gregory IX., in a bull given in Viterbo on 6th October, 1237. Thus S. Martino was for centuries served and ruled by a Cistercian monk, till, indeed, the suppression of the Badia in 1785, when it became a parish church. Its interest for us to-day, however, beautiful and ancient though it be, is chiefly on account of the very lovely picture which stands over the altar in the north aisle. It is an early painting, perhaps by Agnolo Gaddo, perhaps by some earlier follower of Giotto, of Madonna with our Lord in her arms, we see there, certainly one of the most exquisite Giottesque pictures left in the churches of Tuscany. Nor is this all, for in the chancel is a fine fifteenth century ciborium with angels in low relief, and under the name in great capital letters DONATELLVS F. added, as it seems, by a later hand.

Here on the top of this beautiful range of hills, scarcely more than six hundred feet above the sea, the whole Florentine world seems spread out before you. Far away to the left Signa stands on her hill-top, then to the north and west of her the valley passes, and across the valley at the foot of the great mountains little Prato lurks and Calenzano, while far away over these hills rise the faint peaks of the Carrara Mountains, like some beautiful shadow in the sun of afternoon. To the north Monte Morello is piled up into

heaven with a beautiful sure gesture of domination, and beside her, eastward, rise the Lower Apennines, Monte Senario and the rest, with Fiesole and Monte Ceceri in the true east over the City of Flowers. And, as it seems to me, it is not any profound emotion that is stirred by the gesture of these hills; their beauty and meaning are rather intellectual than moral. This valley was ordained, it might seem, for the resurrection of man, and it is just that which is expressed in the hills here, and in the city itself which they crown, while she stands in the valley waiting sunrise or sunset among the mountains.

Leaving Villa Torrigiani, which, not older than the fifteenth, is for the most part a building of the sixteenth century, our way lies to the left. The road from this point climbs gently, really almost on a level, past several groups of houses, Casa dei Frati they call one of them. In something under a mile we pass a good road to the left leading down into the plain, and by that way you may come to Legnaja in about an hour and a half. Passing on, however, in half a mile we come to another road on the left, and taking it in another half mile find ourselves in Mosciano. The old fortress has here too become just a towered villa, but it is not there as it happens that the interest of this tiny village lies, but in its church, S. Andrea, that stands on the left of the road to Legnaja, which we follow, S. Paolo being on the right. Few collegiate churches can be older than S. Andrea in all Tuscany. Standing there certainly in the eleventh century, the canons lived under the rule of a provost, privileged in 1054 by Gherardo, Bishop of Florence, not without the hearty concurrence of Pope Nicholas II. A century later they adopted the rule of S. Augustine, and their superior was thereafter called Priore. After this we hear nothing more of them till they lose their

individuality in the fifteenth century, when Eugenius IV. —sixteen years after his predecessors had given the Augustinian canons of S. Salvatore the Church of S. Donato a Scoperto—in a brief signed in Bologna in October, 1436, invested the Priorato of S. Andrea a Mosciano with the Canonica of S. Donato.

From S. Andrea the road winds quickly down into the valley, crossing the Vignone at the foot of the hills. From there it is about half a mile to S. Maria a Scandicci, to reach which you turn to the left at the Quattro Madonne, four shrines at the corners of the cross roads. If S. Maria a Scandicci cannot claim the fame of S. Andrea a Mosciano, it is nevertheless very old, so old that, as it is said, the Contessa Willa gave it with the rest of her lands at Scandicci to the Badia of Florence in the tenth century. The members of the Badia then became rectors of the church, ruled there with a brief interval, in the thirteenth century, till in the seicento it became just a parish church. Very little remains of value or beauty there. In the sacristy are some quite ruined Giottesque frescoes, and in the church itself, a tabernacle with a statue of Madonna and Child in the coloured terra-cotta of the della Robbia.

Close by at the end of the road opposite the doors of S. Maria, is the little church of S. Bartolo in Tuto, founded, as it is said, by the Conti Cadolinghi, yet it too came not into the hands of the monks of Settimo like so many of the possessions of the Conti Cadolinghi, but, as it seems, into those of the Badia of Florence. A beautiful picture on a gold ground of the Virgin and Child, by some late fourteenth century painter, stands almost hidden over the altar on the north, while over the altar to the south is a fine picture, perhaps by Ridolfo Ghirlandajo, of a Pietà surrounded by many saints. This last work, however, is so difficult to see

that it may well be I am mistaken even in its subject.

Returning to the highway, we follow it, crossing the Greve, and then at the first turning on the left, leave the highway for the church of S. Giusto a Signano, where we may still find one of the loveliest of those Giottesque pictures, which are the joy of these villages outside the city. Here is no Jesus with a bleeding heart for your worship, but our very Lady herself, on a throne of jasper with her little Son in her arms, a thing which Catholic or infidel all the world may worship for its humanity and beauty. By her side stand two angels, and behind S. Peter and S. Paul. No lovelier thing is to be found in the by-ways about Florence, and then, as it happens, it is with that in your heart, you must go into Legnaja, to the tramway, through a veritable slum. But for me, I saw nothing, since in my heart was the best of all.

XII

POGGIO A CAJANO, CARMIGNANO, ARTIMINO, S. MINIATO A SIGNA[1]

THE way by tram to the great Medici Villa of Poggio a Cajano leaves the Piazza della Stazione Centrale, and passing out of the city by the Porta al Prato crosses the Terzolle at Ponte alle Mosse,[2] following the Strada Pistoiese through Peretola, Quaracchi, Brozzi, S. Donnino to S. Pietro a Ponti, where it crosses the Bisenzio, to La Querce, where it crosses the Vignone, coming, after rather more than eight miles' journey, to the little town of Poggio a Cajano on the other side of the river Ombrone, where the great villa stands, a little hemmed in now by houses, its gardens still washed by the tawny waters of that famous stream.

Long before Florence was heard of, so they say, a certain Roman, Cajus by name, built a villa in this place, and certainly long before Salvestro de' Medici made a name for himself the Conti Cadolinghi of Fucecchio in the tenth century owned *poderi* here,

[1] The way described can be followed throughout in a carriage. The drive, by reason of the distance of Poggio a Cajano from Florence, will occupy a whole day. The way to Poggio a Cajano by tram is long and wearisome, occupying as it does more than an hour, but the villa is well worth seeing and the walk so fine that it is worth the initial boredom.

[2] For Ponte alle Mosse and the route, so far as S. Donnino, see pp. 72-89.

which later seem to have passed in part to the monks of S. Bartolommeo in Pistoja and part to the Cancellieri of that city. It is, however, to Lorenzo de' Medici who acquired the property of the latter that Poggio a Cajano owes its fame. The Cancellieri had a castle there, as it seems, and it was this which Lorenzo bought with the lands about it, giving Giuliano da Sangallo the commission to destroy the ruin and to build for him instead the magnificent villa which we see to-day. It was finished in 1485, the beautiful outside staircase being the later work of Stefano di Ugolino Senese. In those days the villa was known as Ambra, taking its name perhaps from a small island in the stream which Lorenzo turned into a paradise of flowers. It became indeed his favourite place of *villeggiatura* and, as it happens, the scene of one of his best poems, those verses, so full of "impressionism," of quite modern observation, which, with the Nencia da Barberino, prove him the greatest poet of his time.

The "Ambra" is in its opening, at any rate, just a description infinitely delicate and full of detail of "the season of floods". After some verses of somewhat careful preparation, almost artificial in their precision, their cunningly arranged pictures, we come suddenly, for all his careful suggestions, on a real "impressionist" picture of the river *itself* when it is angry. How little has escaped those weary eyes; all the eagerness of those lost senses of his seem to have passed into them so that he can see evil and good alike and find the beauty, the necessity of both. In a single night the flood comes. At dusk Ombrone was but a shallow and broken stream, and all you might hear just the singing of the water over the stones, the wind among the reeds. But now in the morning it is a huge whirling mass of waters flecked with foam and bearded too, a swirling,

tossing yellow devil bent on destruction. And it comes out of the cold white vapour of the hills and is lost in the ghostly fog of the plain. Swiftly it is eating away the banks; on its bosom it bears great branches—whole trees too and even cottages, and these, in its terror and malice, it hurls against the bridges to split them and destroy them, till, as it eats its way into the embankment, tearing away the stones and the mud, great fissures appear, and suddenly the river rushes into the fields, the little houses of the peasants, yes, and into the town itself. Nor is Lorenzo without pity too, he who so often has stood aside and piped for others' dancing, for others' tears.

Appena è suta a tempo la villana
Pavida a aprir alle bestie la stalla:
Porta il figlio, che piange, nella zana:
Segue la figlia grande, ed ha la spalla
Grave di panni vili lini e lana:
Va l'altra vecchia masserizia a galla,
Nuotano i porci e spaventati i buoi;
Le pecorelle non si tosam poi.

Alcun della famiglia s' è ridotto
In cima della casa; e su dal tetto
La povera ricchezza vede ir sotto,
La fatica, la speme; e per sospetto
Di sè stesso non duolsi e non fa motto;
Teme alla vita il cor nel tristo petto,
Nè di quel ch' è piu car par conto faccia:
Così la maggior cura ogni altra caccia.

Poggio a Cajano, so much loved by Lorenzo, became indeed the favourite country-house of the Medici family. Lorenzo himself had built there, by the hand of Sangallo, the great dining-hall under a single vault, which, Vasari tells us, was "the largest vault ever seen till now"; he had laid out the gardens and filled the *saloni* with the finest pictures of the fifteenth century.

It was, however, Leo X., the first Medici Pope, who employed Andrea del Sarto, Franciabigio and Pontormo to decorate the great hall with frescoes to represent the glories of his house. There Andrea has painted "Egypt sending Gifts to Cæsar," an allegory of those gifts which the Sultan sent to Lorenzo; Franciabigio has painted "Cicero Returning from Exile," in which we are to see the return of Cosimo de' Medici to Florence in 1434; while Pontormo in the two best frescoes in the room, if we except his exquisite lunette opposite the windows, has painted "The Banquet given by Syphax to Scipio," representing the welcome given to Lorenzo by the King of Naples, and "Titus Flaminius Rejecting the Ambassadors of Antiochus," in which we see Lorenzo's victory at the Diet of Cremona. Pontormo here and at Carmignano, too, is really a great painter. "He had it in him," says Mr. Berenson, "to be a decorator and portrait painter of the highest rank"; if he was sometimes led away by his "awe-struck admiration for Michelangelo," and moved as "an academic constructor of monstrous nudes," here, certainly, he is just himself, the one really first-rate artist who was trained in the school of Michelangelo.

It was not only the earlier Medici, however, Lorenzo and his successors, who loved Poggio a Cajano, but the Grand Dukes also. "On 17th day of May, 1527," writes Varchi,[1] "at eighteen o'clock, the Medici, that is the Cardinal Ippolito and Alessandro, left Florence accompanied by Conte Piero Noferi and others, and there were many who said, as they rode down Via Larga, which was crowded with people, that they would one day repent letting them thus depart alive. They went, full of fear, to Poggio a Cajano, that villa of

[1] Milanesi, *Varchi Storia Fiorentina* (Firenze, 1888). See also the charming study of Poggio a Cajano by Janet Ross in *Florentine Villas* (Dent, 1901), pp. 8-15.

theirs so large and so magnificent. . . . Hardly had they left Florence when the people ran to rob their houses, and only with great difficulty could Niccolò Capponi and other good men hold the mob back and save the houses; and the next day, when, I know not how, the news spread that the Pope was come out of Castel Sant' Angelo, it was said that the Medici with a great following of foot and horse were about to re-enter Florence, and Lodovico Martelli publicly affirmed under the Loggia de' Signori that from his place, Le Gore, they had been seen at Careggi, that villa of theirs two miles out of Florence; and although, not so much because he was a Martelli, and they are generally untrustworthy, as because he was looked on as the sworn follower of his brother-in-law Luigi Ridolfi, small reliance was placed on his word, nevertheless in a few hours, this being repeated, there rose such a hubbub in Florence that (this by now was become a daily custom) the shops and gates were closed. News of the rising was taken by Nibbio, who helped by fear, left Florence in hot haste and returned to Poggio to the Cardinal and the Magnificent, besides which friends wrote to warn them and enemies to frighten them that Piero Salviati was preparing to start with two hundred bowmen on horseback: all this so alarmed the Cardinal that he, with the others, left at once . . . for Pistoja."

As we know, two years later there followed the great siege, but seven years after that, in May, 1536, Charles V. was at Poggio with the bastard Alessandro de' Medici. Seeing the beauty and strength of the place he turned to his host and remarked that "such walls were not meant to hold a private citizen," and, indeed, before he went to Lucca Alessandro was Duke of Florence.

Three years later, on 24th July, 1539, Cosimo I.,

Duke of Florence then,[1] and his wife Eleanora of Toledo, spent a week at Poggio on their way to enter Florence from Pisa. In 1565 their son Francesco met his bride, poor little Joan of Austria, here. Poggio a Cajano was to be the favourite residence of his mistress, the famous, unfortunate, and beautiful Bianca Cappello. Almost the last words Joan of Austria said to her husband on her deathbed were a prayer that he would give up this beautiful, distracting woman. He wept and swore he would do as she wished, but some two months later he married her in spite of his oaths.

The only daughter of a great Venetian house, Bianca Cappello, while she was still a girl, had been lured away to Florence by a certain Pietro Buonaventura, a clerk employed in the Florentine bank of Salviati that in Venice stood opposite her house. With this young Fiorentino she supposed herself to be in love, so that with the help of her maid she used to visit him, till one night when she returned she found her door locked, and supposing she had been discovered, and persuaded by Buonaventura, she fled with him to Florence. Now the Buonaventura were very poor and lived in Piazza S. Marco; moreover, Pietro's mother, being anything but pleased to have him on her hands again with a wife to keep, set Bianca to do all the work of the house, and indeed she had a miserable life. About this time, as it is said, Mondragone, Francesco de' Medici's Spanish tutor, spied out the girl and spoke of her to his pupil, who, often passing that way, saw her and immediately sought how he might possess himself of her, for indeed she was very handsome. Nor was Mondragone slow to help him, for he got his own wife to persuade Bianca and her mother-in-law to visit her

[1] It was not till 1569 that Cosimo I. was declared Grand Duke of Tuscany by Pio V.

at her palace[1] where Francesco awaited her. Harassed as she was by her own family, who sought to kill her, and bullied by the family of her husband which worked her day and night, she asked Francesco for protection, which only too willingly he gave her. So begins the story of their love which was to end so disastrously. Later Francesco bought Palazzo Rucellai for her, together with its beautiful gardens. There, Joan of Austria being dead, one morning Pietro Buonaventura was found murdered in a little passage close to Via del Presto. It seems that he was intriguing with a certain Cassandra Ricci, who was loved also by one of the Cavalcanti. So Buonaventura, grown impudent at his rise in the world, which he owed to his own dishonour, had this Cavalcanti murdered and soon gained his desire with regard to Cassandra. One of her relations, resenting the impudence of this upstart, won the consent of the Grand Duke to his murder, nor did Cassandra escape, for on the following night she was killed also. Then Francesco de' Medici married his mistress, Bianca Cappello, and the Republic of Venice declared her daughter of S. Mark. Bianca, instead of being frightened or appalled at all this bloodshed on her account, seems rather to have gained in confidence. She grew ambitious and called her brother Vittorio from Venice to be Francesco's adviser, till the Medici grew so angry that the Grand Duke was obliged to send him off. Nothing, however, seems to have disturbed the happiness of the two lovers who were altogether wrapped up in each other.

Now about this time Cardinal Ferdinando, the brother of Francesco, disappointed of the Papacy turned his cunning thoughts towards the Grand Duchy.

[1] This was the palace at the corner of Via de' Banchi and Via del Giglio, close to Via Rondinelli.

In October, 1587, he came to Florence, where he was very well received, and immediately he, with his brother and the Grand Duchess, whom he, in common with the rest of the family, bitterly hated, went for the shooting to Poggio a Cajano. On the eighth of that month the Grand Duke was attacked by illness: two days later the Grand Duchess also fell ill, as it seems, of the same malady. Various rumours began to spread about as to these strange illnesses, some saying that the cardinal had poisoned them, which seems, indeed, likely enough, and others that the Grand Duke had eaten too many mushrooms; the Pope even wrote him a homily on the subject.

"To put an end to the various rumours in circulation a statement was sent to Rome on 16th October," says Galluzzi, "setting forth that the Grand Duke has a double tertian fever and incessant thirst; at present everything points towards his restoration to health, as the fourth and seventh days have been easy with abundant sweats, and we hope to go from good to better. But there must be no excess, and the approach of autumn makes us fear the malady will be a long one. Cause therefore prayers to be said, all the more that the Grand Duchess has almost the same sickness, and this increases the malady of the Grand Duke because she cannot attend on him."

"On the ninth day," writes Galluzzi again,[1] "the illness of the Grand Duke augmented and the fever was not purged by two bleedings. It increased and breathlessness came on, so that he died on the night of the 19th October. He had always insisted on treating himself according to his own fashion as to food and iced drinks, and as he was devoured by ardent thirst during the whole course of illness, it was thought

[1] Quoted by Mrs. Ross, *op. cit.*, p. 12. See Galluzzi, *Istoria del Granducato di Toscana*, vol. iv., p. 54 *et seq.*

that he died burnt up by the heating meats and drinks in which he always immoderately indulged. In the post-mortem examination the chief seat of the malady was found to be the liver; this gave him a bad digestion and a harshness of the stomach which led him to indulge in elixirs and such-like drinks for comfort. When the Grand Duke felt that death was near he called his brother, the cardinal, to his bedside, and after begging his pardon for past events, gave him the pass-word for the fortresses and ordered the militia and the troops to be called under arms. As soon as Francesco was dead, Cardinal Ferdinando left Poggio a Cajano for Florence in order to be on the spot if any disorders occurred, but before leaving he paid a visit to the Grand Duchess Bianca, and ordered that her husband's death should be kept from her. He tried to comfort her with hopes of a speedy recovery and consigned her to the care of Bishop Abbioso, her daughter Pellegrina and her son-in-law Ulisse Bentivoglio. Her illness was less severe than that of the Grand Duke, but she was weakened by former maladies and by the violent medicines she had taken in the hope of bearing children. The outrageous noise, the trampling of many feet and the tearful eyes of those about her made her aware of what had happened; she lost consciousness and died at eighteen o'clock on the 20th October."

The cardinal, now the Grand Duke, after ordering that a post-mortem examination should be made of her body in the presence of witnesses, nor did he spare her daughter this ordeal, buried her, not in any tomb of the Medici, but in the crypt of S. Lorenzo in such a manner that no remembrance of her should remain. Everything he did concerning her was mean and petty. His hatred of her was quite strong enough to have caused him to poison both her and her husband,

though it seems to be established that in fact he did not. Wherever her arms were quartered with those of his house he defaced them and substituted those of Joan of Austria, nor would he allow her to be named before him as Grand Duchess, but "insisted on her being repeatedly described as the abominable Bianca". Having thus got rid at one stroke, as it were, of the Grand Duke and Duchess, he proceeded to enjoy the Grand Duchy. Disappointed in his hope of the Papacy, with Tuscany in his grasp, he threw off his ecclesiastical vows, and as though to make as much as he could of a life he had begun by vowing to despise, about a year after his brother's death he married Cristina of Lorraine. She arrived at Poggio a Cajano where Ferdinando I. met her on the evening of the 28th April, 1589. She was but sixteen at the time, and almost beautiful, as she seems to have been, with charming manners, she soon won all hearts. It is said, and we do not wonder at it, that she never loved Poggio a Cajano; the only thing that surprises us is that Ferdinando can have enjoyed meeting his bride in a place so recently the scene of a double tragedy. Perhaps the suspicions people attached to him with regard to it caused him boldly to appoint the very scene of the supposed murder for his wedding-feast.

Though Poggio a Cajano continued to be used now and then as a shooting-box or a country pleasaunce by the Grand Ducal house, its great days seem to have ended with Ferdinando I. To-day it is a mere show palace, such rooms as have been used by the present royal house, Vittorio Emmanuele and his morganatic wife, being decorated and furnished in the truly frightful manner we have been taught to expect.

The way to Carmignano, the way of our walk, leaves the highway exactly opposite the entrance to

Poggio a Cajano. After leaving the last houses of the little town it winds for about three miles through the vineyards and the olives across the plain of the Ombrone, up the lower slopes of Montalbano to Carmignano on its hill under the old Castello of the Pistolesi. All this territory belonged once to the Bishop of Pistoja. It was given to him by Otto III. in 998, and by the middle of the twelfth century certainly the Pistolesi had built the fort there, the remains of which, of it and its descendants, we see to-day.

"In the year of Christ 1154," writes Giovanni Villani,[1] "the Pratesi and the Pistolesi made war one upon another for the *castello* of Carmignano, and there the Pratesi with their troops, though helped by Florence, were defeated by the Pistolesi."

And again:—

"In the year of Christ 1228, when Messer Andrea of Perugia was Podestà of Florence, the Florentines led an army against Pistoia with the *carroccio*, and this was because the Pistolesi were making war against Montemurlo, and ill-treating it; and the said host laid waste the country round about the city up to the suburbs, and destroyed the towers of Montefiore which were very strong; and the fortress of Carmignano surrendered to the Commonwealth of Florence. And note that upon the rock of Carmignano there was a tower seventy cubits high and thereupon two arms in marble, whereof the hands *facevano le corna a Firenze;* wherefore the artificers of Florence, when they wished to express contempt for money or anything else offered to them, used to say: 'I cannot see it, for the fortress of Carmignano is in the way'. And the Pistolesi hereupon agreed to whatever terms

[1] Villani, *Cronica*, lib. iv., cap. 38.

the Florentines might devise, and caused the said fortress of Carmignano to be destroyed."[1]

The century, however, was not dead before the Pistolesi rebuilt their *rocca*, and in the first years of the fourteenth century it came into the hands of a certain Morsciatto Franzesi by a gift of Charles of Valois. Morsciatto, however, after the surrender of Pistoja in 1306, sold the *rocca* of Carmignano to Florence, who threw it down and retained the territory. In 1325 Castruccio Castracani took the place, and, rebuilding the *rocca*, fortified it with walls and battlements and ditches, and it in some sort became his headquarters through that war. In September, 1328, Castruccio being dead, the Florentines took heart again, and attacking the place with 5,000 infantry and 800 horse took it after eight days. It was then decided not to throw down the fortress but rather to strengthen it for fear of another enemy of the Republic, Lodovico il Bavaro, and the whole territory became permanently Florentine.

Carmignano to-day is a small town set in a shoulder of the hill, many feet below the old *rocca*, which, with the village about it, is still known as Castello. The view is magnificent thence, but there is little else to be seen. In the town below, where four streets meet in the midst of it, there is another fine view, of Tizzana to the north-west, which Hawkwood took, and of Pistoja itself, and little Prato too, while to the south rises the dark and splendid hill of Artimino with the great villa on the summit and the village among the trees. On the further outskirts of the town stands the Church of S. Michele with the old Franciscan convent. It is a beautiful old place with a fine cloister, and the church still keeps a small but fine

[1] Villani, *Cronica*, lib. vi., cap. 5.

fragment of a Giottesque altar-piece, an Annunciation; while over the altar on the south side is an extraordinary and beautiful picture by Pontormo, a Visitation, in which Madonna and S. Elizabeth are accompanied by two others, perhaps S. Anna and some "daughter of Aaron". It is like a dance of Graces or Fates—full of a beautiful rhythm and strange colours and laughter and tears. The four women stand there like four roses swaying in the wind and the sun. The church must once, it seems, have possessed several very lovely things, of which these, with the huge S. Antonio in the north transept, an old picture quite spoiled by repainting, are all that remain to her.

From S. Michele you return quite through the town on the way you have come from Poggio a Cajano, till just beyond the last house the road forks and you take the way downhill to the right, coming in little more than a mile to La Serra. Here the road forks again, and again you take the way to the right, coming in half a mile to Le Termine and another fork. Here, too, you take the road to the right into the valley of the Elzana, and in another half mile you find yourself right under the height of Artimino. From here by almost any path through the vineyards you may in some three-quarters of an hour reach the *Cima* and the Castello of Artimino; but if you prefer the road, and though it is longer it is more interesting, where the road forks in the valley under Artimino, turn to the right and then in a hundred yards turn to the left, and follow round the lower slopes of the mountain through Fonte to Le Vergine, half a mile under S. Martino in Campo. Though there is not a single work of art to see all the way from Carmignano to Artimino, the work of Nature is so fine that indeed one comes to think little of churches and cities. All this country is quite unknown, not only to

the traveller but to the Florentine, and yet it is perhaps the wildest and the most beautiful within reach of the city.

S. Martino in Campo, scarcely worth the trouble of a visit, but very picturesque on her hillside, was first a simple church, later a Benedictine Abbey, and is now just a church again. From the cross roads at Le Vergine, the way to the left leads you in half an hour to the little half-romanesque church of S. Leonardo a Artimino. Here again there is little or nothing to see, only just above the church and still in part surrounded by its old walls, its ancient lofty gates still guarding it, you find the Castello of Artimino.

The great hill of Artimino, a bastion of Monte Albano, thrusts itself like a huge battering-ram into the valley of the Arno, forming, with the hills on the other side of the river, the Gonfolina Pass, through which Arno rushes from the plain of Florence to the plain of Empoli. Certain Roman remains, bronze images, urns, coins and such, serve to remind us that even in Sulla's day Artiminius, as it was then called, was of some importance, for Cicero tells us that that general had proclaimed it public property in order to divide it among his soldiers.[1]

It is, however, in the tenth century when Otto III. gave Artimino to Antonino, Bishop of Pistoja, that the mediæval history of the place begins. After that Imperial gift, till 1204, the people of Artimino seem to have enjoyed a considerable amount of political independence, perhaps they were few and their castello of but little importance. However that may be, so soon as war began between Florence and Pistoja their story is the same as that of the people of Carmignano.

[1] Cicero in his nineteenth epistola to Atticus. *Cf.* also G. L. Passerini, *Artiminius* (Parma, 1888), p. 14 *et seq.*, and Janet Ross, *op. cit.*, pp. 148-52.

"When the Florentines invaded the lands of Artimino it seemed as though a tempest had swept over the land, leaving vines, olives, and fruit-trees broken under its passing."[1] There followed a quarrel with Carmignano so that "hardly a day passed without bloodshed". In 1228, as we have seen, the Florentines "with the *carroccio*" went out against the Pistolesi and took Carmignano: and, as I have said, her fate but prophesied Artimino's. It happened in Castruccio's wars when, "not content with taking two murdered prisoners, the Florentines threw down part of the castello and carried home in triumph the bell of the Commune, which was of great size and of most exquisite metal".[2] After Altopascio Castruccio got the place, but when in 1228 he died, Florence returned.

"For three days," says Villani, "the people of Artimino fought against their enemies, but on the third the Florentines delivered the most terrible assault that ever fortress suffered in which the most renowned knights of the army were engaged. It lasted from mid-day till the first hour of the night [one hour after sunset] and the pallisades and gates of the castle were set on fire. For which reason great fear fell on the besieged and on those who were badly wounded by the darts, so that they begged for mercy and offered to surrender if their lives were spared: and so it was done. And in the morning of 27th August they left and delivered up the castello; but in spite of all promises, when the knights who escorted them departed, many were murdered."

Thus Artimino came into the possession of Florence, and though several skirmishes followed on account of

[1] Salvi, *St. della Città di Pistoja* (Roma, 1656), tom. i., p. 249.

[2] Janet Ross, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

it with the Pistolesi, her dominion there was never again seriously questioned.

But if the castello speaks to us of these mediæval days of fighting, it is of a milder and less splendid time that the great villa on the farther peak reminds us. It is Baldinucci,[1] that "pleasant gossip," who tells me the tale.

"His Majesty Ferdinando I., Grand Duke of Tuscany, being one day a-hunting on the hill of Artimino (on the side towards Florence where one looks upon a lovely and most extensive tract of country), seated himself on a chair and calling Buontalenti to his side, he said: 'Bernardo, just on this spot where thou seest me, I desire to have a palace sufficient to contain me and all my court: think about it and be quick'."

The villa was quickly begun, soon finished, and called Ferdinanda after its creator. It is indeed a huge palace in the midst of the woods on the summit of a hill.

"The Villa Ferdinanda," says Riccardi,[2] "is composed of fifty-six rooms: fifteen of which are *a terreno*, fifteen on the first floor, twenty-one on the second and five underground. There is, too, in the centre of the villa towards the south an ample subterranean corridor cut in the living rock, as high as a man, that comes to an end far from the palace, a hundred metres, indeed, on the slope of the hill. Constructed perhaps for a drain this gulley would serve very well in case of need as a secret exit for flight."

The Grand Duke filled the place with beautiful things; one reads of a Titian, a Raphael and a Bronzino

[1] Baldinucci, *Notizie de' Professori del Disegno*, etc. (Firenze, 1848), tom. ii., pp. 505 6.

[2] Riccardi, *Ristretto delle cose piu notabile della città di Firenze* (Firenze, 1767), p. 169.

THE VILLA FERDINANDA, ARTIMINO

sloping there. In 1782, however, Pietro Leopoldo I. sold Artimino to the Marchese di Montegiove, from whom it passed to the Conti Passerini of Cortona, who hold it to-day.

Little as these beautiful hills are visited now, though they are as well worth seeing as any part of Tuscany, it was not always so. They were of old celebrated for their wine, so much so, that Redi, the court physician to Grand Duke Cosimo III., sang its praises in lyric verse, for in those days even a doctor might be a poet.

His joyous, almost boyish, verses have been excellently put into English by Leigh Hunt:—[1]

> God's my life, what glorious claret!
> Blessed be the ground that bear it!
> 'Tis Avignon. Don't say "a flask of it";
> Into my soul I pour a cask of it;
> Artimino's finer still,
> Under a tun there's no having one's fill.

There are two ways of returning to Florence from Artimino. One passes down through the vineyards behind the villa, and as long as you keep ever to the left on your way into the valley you cannot go wrong. By this way you will come in some three-quarters of an hour to the little town of Poggio alla Malva, and so to the new station of Carmignano.

The other road is better and easier to find. Just before coming to the villa you follow the road to the left, and winding downwards into the valley cross the road there and climb the opposite hill into Comeana. It is a walk of half an hour. The road is beautiful and the view over the laughing hills and valleys surpassingly lovely. From Comeana to Signa is some

[1] Leigh Hunt, *Bacchus in Tuscany*. A dithyrambic poem from the Italian of Francesco Redi (London, 1828).

three miles by a good road, that, after passing Pescaiola above the Ombrone, crosses the river at Podere Fornaci, where you turn sharply to the right, climbing through Pergolino and S. Miniato to the Castello of Signa, and so down to the station.

XIII

RIFREDI, QUARTO, CAREGGI, CONVENTO DELLA CONCEZIONE, VIA BOLOGNESE, IL PINO, VILLA SALVIATI, S. MARTA

THERE are many ways that lead from the city to Careggi, that great villa of the Medici where both Cosimo Pater Patriae and Lorenzo il Magnifico lived and died, and the road thence on to the Montughi hills is one of the quietest and loveliest of all the ways about Florence. And then there is so much to see by the wayside.

That is a good way that takes you from Piazza del Duomo[1] by tram to Rifredi in twenty minutes, so that your walk begins from the old bridge there over the Terzolle. Rifredi itself is to-day little more than a suburb of Florence, one of those busy borgos that are bound to spring up around any city quite shut in as Florence is by the iron walls of the *dazio*. Its name, Repetti thinks, may well be derived from the stream on whose banks the little town stands—Rio Freddo; for though the torrent is to-day called Terzolle it was not always so. No doubt in the great wars of the fourteenth century, Rifredi suffered much from Castruccio, from the soldiery of Visconti, from Sir John Hawkwood when he avenged the Pisani. Nor did it

[1] Not by Giotto's tower, but at the corner of Via Arcivescovado behind the baptistery.

escape in the great siege of 1529. Its chief interest for us to-day, however, lies in its church, S. Stefano in Pane.

After crossing the bridge at Rifredi, you take the first road to the right, and in two hundred yards you find yourself before the Pieve of S. Stefano, with its charming portico and ancient tower. Though the most ancient part about it cannot, I think, be older than the twelfth century, it was founded long before then, there being a record of it in the year 915. The *Stemma* in the terra-cotta of the della Robbia over the door belongs to the Tornabuoni, and dates from the end of the fifteenth or the early sixteenth century, at which time too the portico was built.

Within, the church is divided into three naves, with three apses and three doors corresponding to them. Over the great door is a fifteenth century fresco, a Pietà, repeated over the door at the end of the north aisle. The large altar-piece there is a work of Giovanni della Robbia. It enshrines a fine Giottesque picture of Madonna with our Lord in her arms. On either side this shrine stand two figures of prophets, and, though the colouring is a little unfortunate perhaps, the statues are worthy of Giovanni. As much cannot be said for the composition as a whole. Poor in design, you see above two flying angels with a crown in their hands, and below, in the *gradino*, other angels bearing the plaque on which is carved the cypher of our Lord. Under is the following inscription: *Questa Vergine Maria è dal popolo della Pieve di S. Stefano in Pane la quale fu restaurata sino l'anno* MDXXX *di settembre al tempo di Stefano Maccetti e Giovanni Socci operai.—Dipoi fu di novo restaurata pure di settembre l'anno Santo dell'* MDCXXV *al tempo del Rev. Monsignore Luca Mini protonotario Apostolico e pievano di d. pieve.*

We come upon Giovanni's work again in the chapel

at the end of this aisle. For there, hanging on the left wall, is a relief from his hand of the Marriage of the Blessed Virgin. On the north side of the church, and to be entered from it, is the Chapel of the Compagnia di S. Maria del Desio, built in the thirteenth century, and restored and decorated in the seventeenth with fresco of the life of S. Stephen.

Leaving S. Stefano, we follow the road past the first fork, till at the second we take the road to the right, Via del Quarto. Following it for a quarter of a mile till it divides, we then turn to the left into Via della Quiete, and a little later to the right, coming at last to the great gates of the R. Conservatorio delle Montalve, lately il Palagio di Quarto, commonly called La Quiete.

Knocking there for admittance, you are presently led by one of the sisters (for the place is now become a girls' school) into the palace itself, and at last you find yourself in a fine gallery of pictures, a collection of really fine work of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Repetti tells us[1] that this royal villa was founded in the beginning of the seventeenth century by the Grand Duchess Cristina, and adorned with pictures by Grand Duke Cosimo II. Carocci, however, will not have it so. He says that the foundation of the villa is very ancient, that already in the fourteenth century it belonged to the Orlandini del Gonfalone Drago S. Giovanni. A little later, he says, in 1438, it came into the hands of the famous *Condottiero*, Niccolò da Tolentino, who probably received it as a gift from the Republic. They owed him some such thanks certainly. In 1434 he led the Florentine troops against that redoubtable Captain Niccolò Piccinino, who was

[1] Repetti, *op. cit.*, vol. iv., p. 600.

fighting for Visconti of Milan in the endless, useless wars of the fifteenth century. He was beaten and made prisoner, and, as some say, poisoned. The Florentines for once seem really to have loved their defender, for they buried him in the Duomo not far from Sir John Hawkwood, and there Andrea del Castagno painted him on horseback. Then Carocci tells us[1] Pico Francesco de' Medici bought the villa from Tolentino's sons, but sold it to one of the Taddei in 1495. When the Republic fell, the Taddei, however, had to flee for their lives, for they were no friends of the Medici, and so the place came into the hands of Cosimo I., who had just founded his military Order of the Knights S. Stephen. They seem to have held the place for a time, and we find it in the hands of their *Commendatori*, among them Mario Sforza and Cardinal Giovanni Carlo de' Medici. It was from that Order that, according to Carocci, the Grand Duchess Cristina of Lorraine bought the place, and then, in 1650, it passed to the Trinitarians, who, if the Knights of S. Stephen were established to clear the seas of pirates, had long and long ago undertaken the redemption of captives, some 900,000 passing thus through their hands. La Quiete, however, became one of their convents for the reception and education of girls of noble family.

Their gallery of pictures bears witness to their splendour and wealth, and then there are three works here of the school of the della Robbia. The two large lunettes represent the Incredulity of S. Thomas and Christ appearing to S. Mary Magdalen in the garden. They were once in the church of the convent and were probably carved in the early years of the sixteenth century.[2] In the former, you have practically Verrocchio's

[1] Carocci, *op. cit.*, vol. i., p. 270.
[2] See Maud Cruttwell, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

group in the great niche of San Michele, set in a landscape for background. The *Noli Me Tangere* is obviously a work by the same hand. Was it Giovanni della Robbia who made these beautiful, strange things? The *Noli Me Tangere*, says Miss Cruttwell, "has been attributed to Francesco Rustici, the imitator of Leonardo da Vinci, on the basis of the following statement of Vasari in his *Life of Giovanni Francesco Rustici:* 'He executed in half-relief in clay for the nuns of S. Lucia in Via San Gallo, a Christ in the Garden who appears to Mary Magdalen; the which was afterwards glazed by Giovanni della Robbia and placed over an altar in the church of the said sisters between a decoration of *Macigno*'.[1] The statement is of interest, and worthy of consideration, for neither of these reliefs have quite the character of Giovanni's work, nor of any of the school. They approach most nearly . . . to the manner of Benedetto Buglioni. Judging by the one work we possess of Rustici—the Preaching of S. John to the Pharisee—over the north gate of the baptistery, there is little ground for attributing them to him. The work of the bronze statues is of a different quality, freer and nobler." There are three other works here of the della Robbia school; and a Magdalen in the Garden in the entrance hall, a poorer worker than either of the above, and two predellas of angels' heads, that possibly belonged to the two lunettes.

The pictures are many of them very lovely. To the left of the entrance is a big altar-piece, a Marriage of S. Catherine, perhaps by a late Umbrian master. And then, on the left wall, there is an exquisite Giottesque Madonna and Child painted in gold, where our Lord wears a charm round His neck, and in His hand is a

[1] Vasari, *Vite* (Milanesi), vi., 606.

little struggling bird, while under is written REGINA CELI. On the wall at the end of the room to the left is another late painting, again a Marriage of S. Catherine, and to the right four saints and a fifteenth century Florentine picture[1] of the Adoration of the Kings, whilst above, Christ hangs on the Cross in a mandorla of angels, and on one side are two saints and on the other Tobias and the angel. Beside these hangs a beautiful Giottesque Crucifixion painted on gold, with S. John and S. Mary Magdalen at the foot of the Cross, and a picture by some early fifteenth century master of the Ascension.

The most beautiful picture in the room, however, hangs to the right of the entrance. It is a Coronation of the Virgin by some pupil of Amico di Sandro.[2] Above in the heavens, amid a company of virgins, some blowing sweetly on the silver trumpets as at the Elevation itself, amid the sound of lyres and flutes the Turris Eburnea bends before God who crowned Himself with the three crowns of His mysterious majesty, crowns her too Regina Cœli.

Below in our world, what is this company of saints and queens and virgins, that looks—how longingly—into the heavens where she is? Are they not all those who have loved her in the long days of their pilgrimage? There are S. Peter and S. Paul, S. John Baptist and S. Louis of Toulouse, S. Francis of Assisi and S. Bernardino of Siena among the rest, but who is she, that lily, all of rose and white and gold, who, lightly crowned, looks up so sweetly, her robe caught in her hands? Perhaps it is S. Elizabeth of Hungary, and yet I know not. She might indeed be that Aphrodite

[1] Mr. Berenson tells me this is perhaps an early work of Raffaele Botticini.

[2] Again I am indebted to Mr. Berenson for this attribution. Scuola di Amico di Sandro is his verdict.

Alinari

THE CORONATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

From the picture by a pupil of Amico di Sandro in the Conservatorio della Quiete near Rifredi

whose kingdom had fallen before the Maiden of Bethlehem.

Not far from La Quiete, if you follow the road by which you came quite into Quarto, there is a tabernacle at the corner of Via S. Maria, which keeps a fresco by Pontormo ; it is a little difficult to see, but worth all the trouble you may give to see it. When returning on the way past the convent, even so far as the place where you first turned into Via della Quiete, you follow this road of Quietness, and where it forks, keep to the right, till you come again to the Terzolle, and there in front of you, across the stream, a little to the right, is the Villa Medici at Careggi—all you are likely to see of it—for one may not enter without a permit, and that is difficult to get.[1] To the left stands Torre di Careggi, where the illustrious friends of the Medici House were often given hospitality. You may walk quite round the gardens of Villa Medici, without seeing more of it however than you can from here. If you turn upstream to the left and crossing the bridge follow the road uphill and then down to the right so far as the great entrance, that indeed is our way, but before following it, let us recall what we can of the most famous villa of the Florentine country.

The four great villas of the Medici were those of Fiesole, Careggi, Poggio a Cajano and Cafaggiuolo. Of these, the villas at Fiesole and Careggi were the nearer to Florence. Careggi, indeed, lies but two miles to the north-west of the city on the hill of Montughi, that hill which Varchi praises so much, calling it the most delightful of all those round about the city, and named, as he says, "after the ancient and noble family of the Ughi," but as we may prefer to

[1] Those who wish to see the villa must write for permission to Signor Segré, 16 Via Magenta, Rome.

think after the Marchese Ugo, who, according to Villani, founded so many monasteries.

It was in the summer of 1417 that Cosimo de' Medici bought a country-house at Careggi for 800 florins. It was a *palagio* with a courtyard or well, a loggia, arches, dove-cotes, a tower, a walled garden for kitchen stuff, two houses for *contadini*, vineyards, olive gardens and spinnies, all in the parish of S. Piero at Careggi as the contract tells us.[1] And just as when Cosimo wished to build that palace in Via Larga, so now when he was about to rebuild this great country villa, he gave the work to the architect he seems always to have preferred before all the rest, Michelozzo Michelozzi. Here in the villa Michelozzo built, Cosimo gathered his friends about him, filling the great rooms with the work of Fra Filippo Lippi, of Donatello, and the rest; here Marsilio Ficino read Plato to him, Leon Alberti spoke to him of beauty, and here at last he died. It was at Careggi, too, that his son Piero spent most of his time, and there the young Lorenzo listened to the words, and beautiful they must have been, of Lucrezia Tornabuoni his mother, and wandered in the gardens with that strange Greek Argyropolus and read Plato and Aristotle with Ficino and Landino, and heard those country songs that he kept so long in his heart, till he too came to die in this place also, turning his face to the wall when Savanarola spoke of impossible things. The room on the first floor on the south side of the villa is supposed to be that in which Savanarola left him for the last time.

The villa, however, in the first place, was Cosimo's,

[1] Let me once again refer the reader to Mrs. Ross's book on the *Florentine Villas*. It is full of every sort of information and deals with all the greater villas round Florence. The chapter on Careggi will be found at pages 26-36. My debt to the book, both here and in dealing with other villas, is great.

and here he spent all the time he could spare from the affairs of Florence in the company of poets, and artists, and philosophers and the beautiful ladies of his court, of what was a court in all but name. Consider then who they were who have passed perhaps under these very trees. Michelozzo certainly, Donatello too, and his friend Brunellesco and their rival Ghiberti. Was it here Verrocchio first saw Vanna Tornabuoni? Was it among these trees those three ladies danced on a summer afternoon while Botticelli hid in the undergrowth, and Simonetta, searching for the young Giuliano, came through the olives scattering flowers? Perhaps Poliziano, that learned man, here first caught sight of that life which he permitted to pass him by—ah, so reluctantly; perhaps it was here he composed *La Brunettina Mia*, while Sacchetti, laughing at his eagerness, on a wet afternoon, wrote the unforgettable verses we know so well, and Lorenzo himself, the greatest poet of them all, composed the finest poem of his age.

Quant'è bella giovinezza
Che si fuge tuttavia.

But Cosimo, who held Florence in the palm of his hand, bade Marsilio turn the page of his Plato. "Come to us, Marsilio," he writes, "come to us as soon as you are able." Was he not dying? "Bring with you your translation of Plato, *De Summo Bono*, for I desire nothing so much as to learn the road to the greatest happiness."

"The other day," writes Piero to his sons Lorenzo and Giuliano in the last days of their grandfather's life, "I wrote you how much worse Cosimo was; it seems to me that he is gradually sinking, and he thinks the same himself. On Tuesday evening he would have no one in his room save only Mona Con-

tessina and myself. He began by recounting all his past life, then he touched upon the government of the city, and then on its commerce, and last he spoke of the management of the private possessions of our family and of what concerns you two; taking comfort that you had good wits and bidding me educate you well so that you might be able to help me. Two things he deplored. First, that he had not done as much as he wished or could have done; second, that he left me in such poor health and with much irksome business. Then he said he would make no will, not having made one whilst Giovanni was alive, seeing us always united in true love, amity and esteem; and that when it pleased God so to order it, he desired to be buried without pomp or show, and he reminded me of his often expressed wish to be buried in San Lorenzo. All this he said with much method and prudence and with a courage that was marvellous to see; adding, that his life had been a long one and that he was ready and content to depart whenever it pleased God. Yesterday he left his bed and caused himself to be carefully dressed. The Priori of San Marco, of San Lorenzo and of the Badia were present, and he spoke the responses as though in perfect health. Then being asked the Articles of Faith, he repeated them word by word, made his confession, and took the Holy Sacrament with more devotion than can be described, having first asked pardon of all present. These things have raised my courage and my hope in God Almighty, and although according to the flesh I am sorrowful, yet, seeing the greatness of his soul, and how well disposed, I am in part content that his end should be thus. Yesterday he was pretty well and also during the night, but on account of his great age, I have small hope of his recovery. Cause prayers to be said for him by the Monks of the Wood and bestow

alms as seems good to you, praying God to leave him to us for a while if such be for the best. And you, who are young, take example and your share of care and trouble as God has ordained, and make up your minds to be men, your condition and the present care demanding that of you lads. And above all take heed to everything that can add to your honour and be of use to you, because the time has come when it is necessary that you should rely on yourselves and live in the fear of God and hope all will go well. Of what happens to Cosimo I will advise you. We are expecting a doctor from Milan, but I have more hope in Almighty God than in aught else. No more at present. Careggi, the 26th July, 1464."[1]

Poor Mona Contessina, watching her husband die and wondering why he lay with closed eyes though he was not sleeping, asked him, and he answered, "To use them to it". Five days after that letter of Piero's, on the 1st August, 1464, he died, and they buried him as he wished, not without honours, in San Lorenzo. Piero, his son, gouty, and altogether without energy, was content to confirm his political position, and to overwhelm the Pitti conspiracy. It is in Lorenzo, born in 1448, that the Medici family produced its "genius" and Florence one of the greatest of her sons. In his day Careggi must have been even more brilliant and much gayer than in Cosimo's time. He died there. And though his life was certainly not so simple or so honest as his grandfather's had been, he met his death in the most trying and difficult circumstances, certainly not with less dignity and courage. Poliziano, the faithful friend, who perhaps loved him better than any one else, has left us this account of his end.

"The day before his death," writes the poet, "being

[1] *Cf.* Roscoe, *Lorenzo de' Medici* (Bell, 1881), App. iv., p. 415, Ross, *Florentine Villas*, p. 29.

at his Villa of Careggi, he grew so weak that all hope of saving him vanished away. Understanding this, like the wise man he was, he called before all else for the confessor to purge him of his sins. This confessor told us later that he marvelled to see with what courage and constancy Lorenzo prepared himself for death; how well he ordered all things pertaining thereunto, and with what prudence and religious feeling he thought on the life to come. Towards midnight, while he was meditating quietly, he was informed that the priest, bearing the Blessed Sacrament, was come. Rousing himself he exclaimed: 'It shall never be said that My Lord, who created and saved me, shall come to me—in my room;—raise me, I beg of you, raise me quickly so that I may go to meet Him'. Saying this he raised himself as well as he could, and supported by his servants advanced to meet the priest in the outer room. Then crying he knelt down. . . . At length the priest advised that he should be raised from the ground and carried to bed so as to receive the Viaticum in greater comfort. For sometime he resisted, but at last, out of respect to the priest, he obeyed. In bed, repeating almost the same prayer and with much gravity and devotion, he received the Body and Blood of Christ. Then he devoted himself to consoling his son Pietro, for the others were away, and exhorted him to bear this law of necessity with constancy; feeling sure the aid of Heaven would be vouchsafed to him, as it had been to himself in many and divers occasions, if only he acted wisely. Meanwhile your Lorenzo, the doctor from Pavia came; most learned as it seemed to me, but summoned too late to be of any use; yet to do something he ordered various precious stones to be pounded together in a mortar for I know not what kind of medicine. Lorenzo thereupon asked the servants what the doctor was doing in his room and what

he was preparing; and when I answered that he was composing a remedy to comfort his intestines he recognised my voice, looking kindly, as was his wont. 'Oh, Angiolo,' he said, 'art thou here?' and raising his languid arms took both my hands and pressed them tightly. I could not stifle my sobs or stay my tears, though I tried hard to hide them by turning my face away. But he showed no emotion and continued to press my hands between his. When he saw that I could not speak for crying, quite naturally he loosed my hands and I ran into the adjoining room, where I could give free vent to my grief and to my tears. Then drying my eyes I returned, and as soon as he saw me he called me to him and asked what Pico della Mirandola was doing. I replied that Pico had remained in the city, fearing to molest him with his presence. 'And I,' said Lorenzo, 'but for fear that the journey hither might be irksome to him, would be most glad to see him and to speak to him for the last time before I leave you all.' I asked if I should send for him. 'Certainly, and with all speed,' he answered. This I did and Pico came and sat near the bed, while I leaned against it by his knees in order to hear the languid voice of my lord for the last time. With what goodness, with what courtesy, I may say with what caresses, Lorenzo received him. First he asked his pardon for thus disturbing him, begging him to look upon it as the sign of the friendship—the love—he bore him; assuring him that he died more willingly after seeing so dear a friend. Then introducing, as was his wont, pleasant and familiar sayings, he joked also with me. 'I wish,' he said to Pico, 'that death had spared me until your library had been complete.' Pico had hardly left the room when Fra Girolamo of Ferrara, a man celebrated for his doctrine and his sanctity, and an excellent preacher, came in. To his exhortations

to remain firm in his faith, and to live in future, if Heaven should grant him life, free from crime; or, if God so willed it, to receive death willingly; Lorenzo replied that he was firm in his religion, that his life would always be guided by it, and that nothing could be sweeter to him than death if such were the Divine will. Fra Girolamo then turned to go, when Lorenzo said, 'Oh, Father, before going, deign to give me thy benediction'. Then having his head uncovered in piety and religion, he repeated the words and prayers of the friar without attending to the grief more openly shown of his familiars.[1] It seemed as though all save Lorenzo were going to die, so calm was he. He gave no signs of anxiety or of sorrow, even in that extreme moment he showed his usual strength and fortitude. The doctors who stood round him, not to seem idle, worried him with their remedies and assistance: he accepted and submitted to everything they suggested, not because he thought it would save him, but in order not to offend any one even in death. To the last he had such mastery over himself that he joked about his own death. Then when given something to eat, asked how he liked it, he answered, 'As well as a dying man can like anything'. He embraced us all tenderly, and humbly asked pardon if, during his illness, he had caused annoyance to any one. Then disposing himself to receive Extreme Unction he commended his soul to

[1] Whether Poliziano has spoken all the truth or has discreetly drawn a veil over the vulgar brutality of Savanarola, I know not. Pico della Mirandola and half a dozen other eye-witnesses say that when Lorenzo asked for Savanarola's benediction he answered, "Three things are necessary: First, a lively faith in the mercy of God". "I have that," said Lorenzo. "Second," said the friar, "to restore what you have unjustly taken." This Lorenzo agreed to do. "Third," said Savanarola, "to restore Liberty to Florence." And Lorenzo turned his face to the wall, and Savanarola departed without blessing him.

God. The Gospel of the Passion of Christ was then read, and he showed that he understood by moving his lips, or raising his languid eyes, or sometimes moving his fingers. Gazing upon a silver crucifix inlaid with precious stones and kissing it from time to time, he departed."

Thus died one of the greatest of the Florentines; so beloved, that for love of him Poliziano is said to have died of grief, Pico della Mirandola to have entered a convent, whilst his doctor Piero Leoni "killed himself in despair at not being able to save him". And, indeed, after him the deluge. Twice were the Medici expelled from Florence after his death, once in 1494 and again in 1527.

In 1529 "Dante and Lorenzo di Castiglione and a number of young men went in haste and set fire to the villas of Careggi and Castello. . . ." Well, they succeeded only in part. Alessandro de' Medici restored Careggi before he was murdered by his cousin Lorenzino, but though Grand Duke Ferdinando liked the place well and tried to revive Lorenzo's Platonic Academy, with Lorenzo's death Careggi leaves the page of history and even drops out of the memoirs. In 1779 the Grand Duke sold it, since when it has been in foreign hands.

From before the great entrance of Villa Medici a road Via della Chiesa winds uphill towards the church of S. Pietro. It is a beautiful way between the gardens, while before you on the hills are the fine and lovely villas of which old Varchi speaks, so that all the world here is a garden.

S. Pietro with its pretty country portico had the Medici for patrons, but little remains to it from their time. Only indeed a charming little picture where Madonna sits with our Lord in her lap among angels

and cherubs by Benozzo Gozzoli, and that is only come to the church in our time.

Leaving S. Pietro, when the road divides we turn to the right, and presently before an old villa on the right to the left uphill, winning soon a fine view over Val d'Arno, with the great hills of Montorsoli and S. Donato in Colle far away to the south and east, and all the pleasant land of Tuscany, Val di Greve, Val di Pesa, before us. Then as we get higher, while that fair far-away world is hidden from us, the hills open to the north and we look over the bare valley of the Terzollina to Monte Morello, that extinct volcano under whose shadow Florence lies, so peaceful now. Passing the little convent of the *Concezione*, built by the Cappuccini, we follow the road to the right from Villa Terra Rossa, coming in a hundred yards or so into Via Bolognese. Turning there to the right and following the highway towards Florence, in a mile you find yourself at Il Pino, that little church at the top of a great flight of steps with its charming portico, beside which, as it seems, a pine tree has always grown. A hundred yards below the church a way turns to the left out of Via Bolognese, and by that way you pass the Villa Salviati which, built possibly by Michelozzo, was at the height of its glory in the seventeenth century.[1]

By this way you come in twenty minutes to the Ponte della Badia where Stilicho defeated Radagaisus, and so to San Domenico under Fiesole, where you find the tram for Florence. But if, instead of leaving Via Bolognese, you follow it to La Loggia, though the way is not so fine, you may then pass the old convent of Santa Marta once so rich in pictures.

After passing La Loggia you take the first way to

[1] Mrs. Ross in her *Florentine Villas* has a long account of the glories of the villa in the days of Cosimo I.

CAREGGI WITH MONTE MORELLO IN THE BACKGROUND

the right, and in something less than a mile, after passing a fine dim shrine, you come to the old convent, very grand still though ruined.

DEO ET D. MARTHÆ.

You read over the portal:—

LOTTIERIUS. DAVANZATIUS. EREXIT. TESTAMENTO. MCCCXXXVI. LOTTA. ACCIAIOLIA. CUM. XI. NOBILIB. INGRESSA. EST. MCCCXLIII. IOHANNES. BARTHOLOM. F. *DAVANZATIUS AUXIT MDIC.*

It tells the whole story.

Lottieri di Davanzanti by his will of 1336 built the convent on this hill of Montughi, and gave it to the *humiliati*. In 1343 the place became a nunnery, and the first nun was Lotta Acciajuoli, widow of one of the Cornacchini who entered into the convent with eleven noble companions. In 1579 a thunderbolt struck the convent and killed two nuns and a little girl. Then in 1599, at the cost of Giovanni di Bartolommeo Davanzati, it was rebuilt. All sorts of precious and wonderful things once were gathered in the church here. Carocci speaks of an Agnolo Gaddi, a Filippo Lippi, a Giovanni della Robbia, but to-day they have all been imprisoned in the galleries. The old convent is quite bare, only, even yet the little nuns linger there whispering, whispering behind the gratings, the Rosary of Madonna.

It is a straight road from S. Marta to the highway, and thence we turn to the right into the city by Porta S. Gallo.

XIV

THE WAY OF CATILINE, QUINTO, SESTO, SETTIMELLO, AND CALENZANO

THE Strada di Prato, leaving Florence by the Porta al Prato, and turning immediately northward, crosses the Mugnone by Ponte alle Asse, passing through Rifredi, and under Quarto and Quinto, milestones, as their names suggest, on the old Roman Way, which at Sesto enters the first considerable little town, just six miles from the city. It is the way for the most part that the railway travels on its road to Prato, Pistoja, and the north. And for the most part too the tram is content to use it, old as it is, renamed now Via Vittorio Emanuele, as though King Victor Emmanuel had had something to do with it. But in truth this way, beside whose milestones even to Settimello the people gathered themselves into villages, is older than Modern Italy, older than the Renaissance even, or the Latin Republics of the Middle Ages; it is the Roman road to Prato, and by that way Catiline went.[1]

"Now Catiline," says Villani, in his true story-telling vein, "now Catiline, having departed from Rome with

[1] This route may be as easily driven as walked. In the latter case, take the tram from Piazza del Duomo (corner Via Arcevescovado) to Sesto. For the return a train should be taken from Calenzano. See time-table.

part of his followers, came into Tuscany, where Manlius, one of his principal fellow-conspirators, who was captain, had gathered his people in the ancient city of Fiesole, and Catiline being come thither, he caused the said city to rebel against the lordship of the Romans, assembling all the rebels and exiles from Rome and from many other provinces, with lewd folk disposed for war and for ill-doing, and he began fierce war with the Romans. The Romans hearing this, decreed that Caius Antonius, the consul, and Publius Petreius, with an army of horse and many foot, should march into Tuscany against the city of Fiesole and against Catiline, and they sent by them letters and messengers to Quintus Metellus, who was returning from France with a great host of the Romans, that he should also come with his force from the other side to the siege of Fiesole, and pursue Catiline and his followers.

"Now when Catiline heard that the Romans were coming to besiege him in the city of Fiesole, and that Antonius and Petreius were already with their host in the plain of Fiesole, upon the bank of the river Arno, and how that Metellus was already in Lombardy with his host of three legions which were coming from France, and the succour which he was expecting from his allies which had remained in Rome had failed him, he took counsel not to shut himself up in the city of Fiesole, but to go into France; and therefore he departed from that city with his people and with a lord of Fiesole who was called Fiesolanus, and he had his horses' shoes reversed to the end that when they departed the hoof-prints of the horses might show as though folk had entered into Fiesole, and not sallied forth thence, to cause the Romans to tarry near the city, that he might depart thence the more safely. And having departed by night to avoid Metellus, he did not hold the direct road through the mountains which we

call the Alps of Bologna,[1] but took the plain by the side of the mountains and came where to-day is the city of Pistoja[2] in the place called Campo Piceno, that was below where to-day is the fortress of Piteccio, purposing to cross the Apennines by that way, and descend thence into Lombardy, but Antonius and Petreius, hearing of his departure, straightway followed after him with their host along the plain, so that they overtook him in the said place, and Metellus, on the other hand, set guards at the passes of the mountains, to the end he might not pass thereby. Catiline, seeing himself to be thus straitened, so that he could not avoid battle, gave himself and his followers to the chances of combat with great courage and boldness, in the which battle there was great slaughter of Romans from the city and of rebel Romans and of Fiesolani, at the end of which fierce battle Catiline was defeated and slain in that place of Piceno with all his followers; and the field remained to the Romans, but with such dolorous victory that the said two consuls with twenty horse, who alone escaped, did not care to return to Rome. The which thing could not gain credence with the Romans till the senators sent thither to learn the truth; and, this known, there was the greatest sorrow thereat in Rome. And he who desires to see this history more fully, let him read the book of Sallustio called *Catalinario*. The injured and wounded of Catiline's people who had escaped death in the battle, albeit they were but few, withdrew where is to-day the city of Pistoja, and there in vile habitations became the first inhabitants thereof, whilst their wounds were healing. And after, by reason of the good situation and fruitful soil, the inhabitants thereof increased, which afterwards built the city of Pistoja, and by reason of the great mortality and pesti-

[1] In other words, he did not go by Via Bolognese.
[2] That is to say, he went by Strada di Prato.

lence which was near that place, both of their people and of the Romans, they gave it the name of Pistoja; and therefore it is not to be marvelled at if the Pistojans have been and are a fierce and cruel people in war among themselves and against others, being descended from the race of Catiline and from the remnants of such people as his, discomfited and wounded in battle."

Just there speaks the Florentine ready to twist even the derivation of a word against those he hates. Pistoja, however, can very well look after herself, and indeed it is not of her but of Catiline and his army hastening along this very road towards disaster that we think as we pass through Rifredi, that noisy village now little more than a suburb of the city, and following in his wake come to Castello and its Grand Ducal villas, and hastening on, under Quinto, reach Sesto at last, where the tramway comes to an end.

Just a mile before you come to Sesto, however, Quinto lies on the lower hills. You reach it by leaving the tram at the *Case delle Monache*, and taking the road there on the right, follow it uphill for three hundred yards till it bears suddenly to the right. Then when it meets a highway, you turn sharply to the left, and following this new way, to the right when it forks, in a few minutes you find yourself standing before the Church of S. Maria al Quinto.

Quinto itself, as its name implies, was a little village that gathered itself about the fifth milestone on the Prato road. Rebuilt and wholly restored in 1770, the Church of S. Maria keeps still that picture which as its inscription tells us Maria Giovanna di Dino de' Grilli caused to be set there. It is a panel of the Annunciation by some follower of Giotto, one of the loveliest things certainly in a country full of such surprises. Beside it is a fifteenth century tabernacle, bearing the arms of the Aldobrandini, that powerful family which

long and long ago had all this country in fee from the Bishop of Florence.

Leaving Quinto and continuing on our way past the church, turning neither to right nor left, in half a mile we come to Colonnata di Sesto in the hills where of old the Aldobrandini ruled. For long enough now, however, it is the Conti Ginori who have been famous there.

All the world knows those porcelains, which good, bad and indifferent, as the taste of the years has decreed, but as it might seem always as good as the time allowed, have been made at Doccia by the Ginori workmen, and strangely enough have been used to decorate, a little too lavishly one may think, the Villa Ginori itself. The place is well worth a visit. First founded in Europe at Meissen in 1710, then at Vienna, the manufacture of porcelain was begun in Tuscany by Conte Carlo Ginori in 1735, thus taking precedence, in date at any rate, of the French *Fabrique* of Sèvres. The earlier pieces made here at Colonnata are, as might be supposed, of a great price, and have for the most part found their way into the cabinets of the collectors, the corridors of our museums. Carlo Ginori himself, to whom nature had given both energy and good taste, brought from Vienna, it is said, the artisans Carlo Wandelein and Alaric Prugger: in his employment too we find the sculptor Bruschi and the painter Aureiter. There was therefore very little distinctly Tuscan in the work he proposed to himself to achieve. Perhaps that is why in spite of its complete material success it remained without real distinction. The pottery of Urbino and Gubbio and Castel Durante, the work of Maestro Giorgio and his assistants, done certainly in a less precious material, remains how much more lovely than even the finest work of Doccia. Yet we read that Ginori's success was complete and that the Government gave him the monopoly of such work here in

Tuscany. In 1743 the Neapolitans at Capodimonte began to decorate their porcelains with little bas-reliefs; but when that *fabricca* came to an end in the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Ginori appropriated the invention, and a little later began to imitate the work of the della Robbia, and, in 1847, that done in the sixteenth century at Urbino, Gubbio and Pesaro. To-day the factory employs some twelve hundred workmen who have their homes here in Colonnata.

It is a straight road from Doccia back to the Strada di Prato, and then, turning to the left, a short quarter of a mile into the little Piazza of Sesto Fiorentino, where the tramway comes to an end.

Sesto Fiorentino itself would have but little interest for us to-day, old as it is, for little of antiquity remains to it, if it were not for its Church of S. Martino, founded already in 868, and once under the patronage of the Aldobrandini, given them in fee with the neighbouring *contrada* of Colonnata by Rimbaldo, Bishop of Florence in the time of Otho I.

To reach the church you leave the narrow Piazza in which the tram stops by a street on the left, now called Via Giuseppe Verdi, and presently between the houses you come into a great open space in which S. Martino stands, the only ancient thing there, behind a beautiful portico. Within, the church has suffered restoration, which, while doubtless it has robbed us of much that was lovely, seems yet to have brought to light all that was left of certain frescoes there of the early fourteenth century. The great treasure of the church, however, consists in two things: the magnificent Giottesque Crucifix over the eastern door, and the picture, all that is left of what was once a triptych, representing perhaps the Assumption. While in the oratory annexed to the church, the Oratorio di S. Giovanni Battista,

there is a stucco carving of the Madonna which merits, certainly, even if it may not really claim, its attribution to Donatello himself.

Leaving S. Martino, and returning to the Strada di Prato, you follow it quite through the town, till, in the country again, just after passing a little stream that runs under the road between the last houses, the way forks and you turn right, following still Via Vittoria Emanuele, as it is called, leaving here the ancient way to Prato. And in spite of its being all a highway, this road on the skirts of the hills, which passes through the vineyards and by the olive groves, sometimes winding by a garden, sometimes stealing along in the shadow of the cypresses, has a charm wanting to many a by-way, possessing indeed many of the delights of a river winding at the foot of the hills, the surprising quiet, the unexciting surprises of a broad stream wandering out of the meadows into the villages, and out of the villages into the gardens, and out of the gardens round about the hills.

For nearly a mile it wanders across the plains in the shadow of the mountains under S. Jacopo a Quercetto, that beautiful church the colour of a Gloire di Dijon rose, such a church as you seldom find nowadays in Tuscany, but that of old must often have cheered the traveller, weary on the way, with the sound of its bells at evening ringing the Angelus.

It is another church, a church of the plain, that, if you are lucky, you may just descry across the vineyards, due south from Quercetto, S. Maria and S. Bartolommeo a Padule they call it. You may find a fresco there of the fifteenth century, over the door, Madonna with our Lord in her arms between S. Bartolommeo and another, while beside it is another fresco, of the same period, but not from the same hand, in which you see again S. Bartolommeo with S. Giovanni Bat-

tista and another. If you seek it out, take the first road to the left after leaving Strada di Prato, and following it across the railway turn right, and then take the second road to the left—but it is scarcely worth the time and trouble, for you must return to Via Vittorio Emanuele.

So between the churches and the gardens, after passing the shaved cypresses of Villa Gamba, a building of the sixteenth century, you come at last into the little village of Settimello on the first low spur of the hills.

Settimello, the village of the seventh milestone, is famous, if at all, by reason of its poet Arrigo or Arrighetto da Settimello who sang, alas, in Latin, in the very dawn of Letters, at the end of the twelfth century. Who thinks of him to-day? Yet he was the most applauded writer of his time, and even now if you will take the trouble to read it the *De Diversitate Fortunae et Philosophiae Consolatione* has both beauty and delight, while long and long ago it was held to be so fine that it served in the public schools as an example of rare Latinity. Indeed, in his *Vite degli Uomini Illustri* Filippo Villani speaks of Arrighetto as a man of the finest sort of genius, of easy and ready invention. He was born here in Settimello of poor *contadini;* but he gave himself to study, especially of poetry, and being ordained priest became *Pievano* of Calenzano, not far away on its beautiful hill. He lost it, however, after a long lawsuit and returned to Settimello to die. And there in the church you may read his epitaph, written in the eighteenth century.

Henrico. Septimellensi.
Qui. Saeculo. Christi. XII. Calentianensis.
Plebis. Sacerdotio. Functus. Eodemque. per.
Summum. Iniuriam. Orbotus. Pauperrimae.
Vitae. Incommoda. Elegiaco. Veementissimo.
Carmine. Deflens. Latium. Melos. Situ.
Obsitum. ad. Priscae. Venustatis. Normam.
Erexit. et. Obscurum. Patriae. Nomen.
Illustravit.

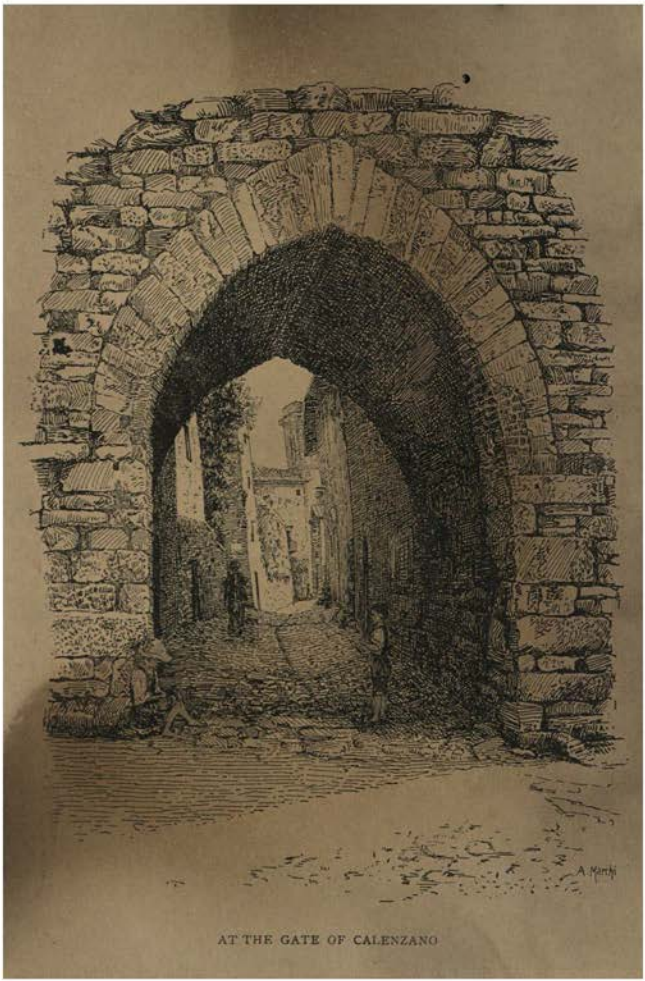
As you return from the by-way in which the church stands, at the corner of Via Vittorio Emanuele, in the middle of the village is a tabernacle which still keeps its fresco of Madonna with our Lord in her arms surrounded by many saints; it is the work of some follower of Giotto. Then, following the road you come out of Settimello, where the road forks keeping straight on, turning neither right nor left till after passing a group of houses you mount a steep bridge across the Chiosina.

From that bridge a wonderful view opens before you. To the north lies the mass of Monte Morello, blue and violet and rosy and gold in the varying light of the day; while Settimello as you see lies on its lowest bastion called indeed Le Capelle. There on the western slope under the great mountain, in the middle distance lies the towered villa—villa or castle is it?—of Baroncoli, built early in the fifteenth century by the family of that name and later in possession of the Ginori. Farther west but nearer to you, rises the hill of S. Donato, and opposite to it, west and south, the walled village of Calenzano, as of old very fair and seeming impregnable.

S. Donato indeed as seen from this bridge seems just a church and one immense castellated villa, and indeed on closer acquaintance it proves to be just that.

Following the road over another bridge, among the first houses by the wayside, beside a shrine, you turn to the right into Via de' Betti, and climbing, come into S. Donato.

The *Pieve* of Calenzano, mistress once of twelve churches, stands nearly a mile away from the Castello of Calenzano, on a hill divided from it by a stream. The tower is still fine, picturesque, with outstanding battlements like a crown, and above them a short strong



AT THE GATE OF CALENZANO

tower. The colouring of the place too is lovely, exquisitely rosy amid the green and grey of the cypresses and olives, the shadows on the hills. And here better almost than anywhere else in Tuscany you may understand how great and considerable a personage a *pievano* was.[1] That huge and splendid villa, battlemented like a castle, was his canonica. There he ruled his twelve churches, and there in the pleasant country quiet the Bishop of Prato came to visit him. Later the place seems to have fallen into the hands of the Medici if we may judge by their scattered arms.

The beauty and interest of Calenzano itself is certainly not less than that of its *Pieve*. You pass down the steep way from S. Donato into the valley, and cross the Marina, only to climb, by a steeper road still, up to the old castello, surrounded, in part at least, by its ancient walls, its great gateway on either side letting you in and out, while behind those ivy-clad bastions, those terraced vineyards and olive gardens, rise the gaunt bare hills wooded but half-way to the top.

Entering Calenzano by this way you must pass in by the great northern gate, under the guard-house so silent now, as at S. Fiora on Mont' Amiata. And truly, even with Malmantile in mind, I think there is no place in Northern Tuscany that gives you so fine an idea of what a castello really was as Calenzano. It was, and for the most part it remains, a walled village clustered round a fortress.

The fortress was that of the Conti Guidi. Conte Guido Vecchio died in 1213. "As to him," says Villani, "it is said that in ancient times his forebears were great barons in Germany which came over with the Emperor Otho I., who gave them territory in Rom-

[1] *Cf.* also my *In Unknown Tuscany*, with notes by William Heywood. (Methuen, 1909.)

agna and there they remained; and afterwards their descendants, by reason of their power, were lords over almost all Romagna and made their headquarters in Ravenna, but because of the outrages they wrought on the citizens concerning their wives, and other tyrannies, in a popular tumult they were driven out of Ravenna and pursued and slain in one day, so that none escaped either small or great, save one young child which was named Guido; the which was at Modigliana at nurse, and was surnamed Guido *Besangue* through the disaster of his family. . . . This Guido was the father of Count Guido Vecchio whence all the Guidi are descended. This Count Guido Vecchio took to wife the daughter of Messer Bellincione Berti[1] of the Rovignani, which was the greatest and the most honoured knight in Florence, and his houses which were at Porta San Piero above the Old Gate descended by heritage to the counts. This lady was named Gualdrada,[2] and he took her for her beauty and her fine speech, beholding her in S. Reparata with the other ladies and maidens of Florence. For when the Emperor Otho IV. came to Florence and saw the fair ladies of the city assembled in Santa Reparata in his honour, this maiden most pleased the Emperor, and her father saying to the Emperor that he had it in his power to bid her kiss him, the maiden made answer that there was no man living which should kiss her save he were her husband, for which speech the Emperor much commended her; and the said Count Guido being taken with love of her by reason of her graciousness and by the counsel of the said Otho the Emperor, took her to wife not regarding that she was of less noble lineage than he nor regarding her dowry: whence all the Counts Guidi are born. . . ."

[1] *Cf.* Dante, *Par.*, xv., 211; xvi., 99.
[2] *Cf.* Dante, *Par.*, xvi., 94-99; *Inferno*, xvi., 37.

Thus the Guidi came into Tuscany. They held many castles, as we know, more important than Calenzano, but already in 1203, ten years before Guido Vecchio's death, they were fighting with the Pistolesi, who had taken their Castello of Montemurlo. The Florentines got that back again for them, but their power in Calenzano does not seem to have endured any longer than their power in Florence. With the advent of the great quarrel they took refuge in their eyries and especially in Casentino. However that may be, and some of them were Guelfs and some Ghibellines, and some both Guelf and Ghibelline,[1] Calenzano soon passed into the power of other *magnati*. Whoever held it in 1260 was a Guelf, for after the great battle of Montaperto, in the hot September weather when the vines were loaded with grapes, the Ghibellines sacked and destroyed the Castelvecchio. Then Castruccio Castracani sacked and burnt the place in 1325, and finally in 1351 it fell into the hands of Visconti of Milan. Rebuilt and munitioned for war by the Republic of Florence in 1352, it defended itself not without a certain success when Hawkwood and his Englishmen swept over the *Fiorentino* in the following year. Then it seems to have fallen into decay and to have been almost deserted. Little remains to it save its gates and walls and towers from the fourteenth century. The Church of S. Niccolò is the ancient chapel of the castello, it keeps about it still certain traces of its antiquity, its chief treasure being a fine Giottesque picture of the Annunciation.

Do not be in a hurry to leave Calenzano, there are but few places in these beautiful valleys half so fair as she, and none with just her aspect of strength, that has passed into sweetness with beauty and peace. But

[1] Villani, *Cronica*, lib. v., cap. 37.

when at last you leave her at the end of a summer day, you will pass out by the southern gate, that beautiful gate which from the valley in itself looks truly like a fortress. Thence the road winds down into the valley to the railway, to the station. The trains are few, but there is always one at evening, and the way to Sesto (where you would find the tram), not under the hills, but across the dusty plain, has neither interest nor beauty. So let it be by train that you pass out of the summer twilight of the hills, where Calenzano, all stained with gold, looks far away toward Tazzia and Signa, to the night of Florence, with the songs of the hills in your heart.

XV

RUSCIANO, PARADISO, BADIA A RIPOLI, BADIA A CANDELI, RIGNALLA, VICCHIO A RIMAGGIO, AND QUARTO

OUTSIDE the Porta S. Niccolò on the way to Bagno a Ripoli, just beyond La Mattonaja, a little by-way climbs the hill on the right to the great villa that Brunelleschi built for Luca Pitti, Villa di Rusciano. How often it has changed masters it would be difficult to say, even Sacchetti notices the number and variety of its owners; but then it is very old, and its ancestors have stood there since the time of Charlemagne and even before that, for he gave it to the Church of S. Miniato al Monte. Three hundred years later Pope Nicholas II. handed it over to the Ospedale di S. Eusebio; then it came into the hands of the sisters Buoninsegna and Princia, and they in 1267 sold it with its lands to the nuns of S. Jacopo in Pian di Ripoli. Then more than a hundred and fifty years later Luca Pitti, at the height of his prosperity, bought the place, and by the hand of Brunelleschi, in 1474, began the beautiful villa which to-day crowns the hill, and is indeed rather, as Vasari said, "a luxurious and superb palace" than a villa. It might seem, however, that Brunelleschi only repaired and added to the older villa, for while the eastern part seems to be his, the western

is certainly more ancient, and the southern is work of the late sixteenth century.

"One of fne glories of Rusciano," writes Mrs. Ross in the book I have so often quoted,[1] "one of the glories of Rusciano, much written about by critics, is a most beautiful window looking into the courtyard, but lately covered in. It is said by some to be by Brunelleschi, but the exaggerated *consoles* ornamented with acanthus leaves, and the pillars at the sides with Corinthian capitals, are not like the work of the great master. The garlands of flowers at the sides, tied in here and there, remind one of those on the monument to Marsuppini by Desiderio da Settignano, as does the delicate frieze at the top. Herr von Fabriczy suggests that this lovely window, which recalls those of the palaces at Urbino and Gubbio, may perhaps have been designed by Luciano da Laurana, architect to Federigo di Montefeltro, to whom, as we shall see, the villa belonged for a short time. Anyhow this one richly ornamented piece of architecture contrasts strangely with the absolute simplicity, almost amounting to bareness, of everything else in the courtyard. Dr. Carl von Stegmann, in his *Architekten der Renaissance*, thinks the frieze and the shape of the capitals are in the style of Desiderio da Settignano, while the garlands of flowers remind him more of the work of Benedetto da Majano. The rooms of the villa are of huge size, and many still retain their fine old wooden ceilings, gigantic beams resting on simply shaped *consoles* with curved outlines."

Pride goeth before a fall—yet Luca Pitti forgot it quite. "So foolish was he in his own conceit," Machiavelli tells us, "that he began at one time two stately and magnificent houses, one in Florence, the other at

[1] Janet Ross, *Florentine Villas*, p. 38.

Rusciano, not more than a mile away, but that in Florence was greater and more splendid than the house of any other private citizen whatsoever. To finish this latter he baulked no extraordinary way, for not only the citizens and better sort presented him and furnished him with what was necessary for it, but the common people gave him all of their assistance; besides, all that were banished or guilty of murder, felony, or any other thing which exposed them to punishment, had sanctuary at that house provided they would give him their labour."

Now, when Cosimo was dead, and Piero de' Medici was the head of that family, Niccolò Soderini was made Gonfaloniere of Justice, and, thinking to secure the liberty of the city, he began many good things, but perfected nothing, so that he left his house with less honour than he entered into it. This fortified Piero's party exceedingly, so that his enemies began to resent it and to work together to consider how they might kill him, for in supporting Galenzzo Maria Sforza to the dukedom of Milan—which his father Francesco, just dead, had stolen for himself—they saw, or thought they saw, the way in which Piero would deal if he could with Florence. Thus the Mountain, as the party of his enemies was called, leaned threatening to crush him surely every day. But Piero, who lay sick at Careggi, armed himself, as did his friends, who were few in the city. Now the leaders of his enemies were Luca Pitti, Dietosalvi, Neroni, Agnolo Acciajuoli and most courageous of all Niccolò Soderini. He, taking arms, as Piero had done, and followed by most of the people of his quarter, went one morning to Luca's house, entreating him to mount and ride with him to Palazzo Vecchio for the security of the senate, who, as he said, were of his side. "To do this," said he, "is victory." But Luca had no mind for this game, for many reasons,

—for one, he had already received promises and rewards from Piero; for another, he had married one of his nieces to Giovanni Tornabuoni,—so that, instead of joining him, he admonished Soderini to lay down his arms and return quietly to his house. In the meantime the senate, with the magistrates, had closed the doors of Palazzo Vecchio without appearing for either side, though the whole city was in tumult. After much discussion they agreed, since Piero could not be present, for he was sick, to go to him in his palace, but Soderini would not. So they set out without him; and arrived, one was deputed to speak of the tumult, and to declare that they who first took arms were responsible; and that, understanding Piero was the man, they came to be informed of his design and to know whether it were for the advantage of the city. Piero made answer that not they who first took arms were blameworthy but they who gave occasion first: that if they considered their behaviour towards him, their meetings at night, their subscriptions and practices to defeat him, they would not wonder at what he had done; that he desired nothing but his own security, and that Cosimo and his sons knew him to live honourably in Florence, either with or without a Balia. Then, turning on Dietosalvi and his brothers who were all present, he reproached them severely for the favours they had received from Cosimo, and the great ingratitude which they had returned; which reprimand was delivered with so much zeal that, had not Piero himself restrained them, there were some present who would certainly have killed them. So he had it his own way, and presently, new senators being chosen and another gonfaloniere, the people were called together in the piazza and a new Balia was created, all of Piero's creatures. This so terrified "The Mountain" that they fled out of the city, but Luca Pitti re-

mained, trusting in Giovanni Tornabuoni and the promises of Piero. Now mark his fall. "He quickly learned the difference between victory and misfortune, betwixt honour and disgrace. His house, which formerly was thronged with visitors and the better sort of citizens, was now grown solitary and unfrequented. When he appeared abroad in the streets his friends and relations were not only afraid to accompany him, but even to own or salute him, for some of them had lost their honours for doing it, some their estates, and all of them were threatened. The noble structures which he had begun were given over by the workmen, the good deeds requited with contumely, the honours he had conferred with infamy and disgrace. For many persons who in the day of his authority had loaded him with presents, required them again in his distress, pretending they were but loans and no more. Those who before had cried him to the skies, cursed him down as fast for his ingratitude and violence; so that now, when it was too late, he began to repent himself that he had not taken Soderini's advice and died honourably, seeing that he must now live with dishonour."

But Luca Pitti was not only "wise in his own conceit," as Machiavelli says, but "a weathercock, moreover badly surrounded," as Alessandra Strozzi knew. After all his plots he abandoned his anti-Medicean faction and accepted pardon at the hands of Piero.

So when in 1472, the Florentines, grateful for once, received the Captain-General of their army, Conte Federigo di Montefeltro, outside the gates and led him in procession to Piazza Signoria where he was publicly thanked for his services and given a richly dressed horse and a silver helmet set with jewels and chased in gold with Hercules trampling on a gryphon as its crest, all made by Pollajuolo, Luca Pitti was glad to sell Rusciano cheaply to the Republic that they might

present it to their general with the freedom of their city.

Federigo loved his mountains too well to stay long here in the valley, but the villa remained to his house till Guidobaldo, his successor, sold it to the Frescobaldi, since when it has passed from hand to hand, Baron von Stumm being the present owner.

Returning from Rusciano to the old Via Aretina,[1] in about a quarter of a mile you come to cross roads where on the right, beside a spoiled shrine, Via del Paradiso leaves the highway. Following the way of Paradise, in a few moments you come to a group of wretched houses, and there behind them is all that is left of the Monastero di S. Salvatore e di S. Brigida.

The Badiuzza al Paradiso, or S. Maria di Fabroro as it used to be called before it was translated in the eighteenth century to the neighbouring church of the then lately suppressed nuns of the *Brigidiane* at Paradiso, was in the possession of an Order which consisted of religious of both sexes, who had in common both the church and the monastery, but, as might be supposed, were themselves completely separated.

In 1390 Antonio di Niccolajo degli Alberti, one of the richest and most powerful of the citizens of Florence,[2] founded a great monastery in the *poderi* of one of his villas and gave it to the Order of S. Bridget of Sweden. This Order, founded by S. Bridget in 1344, is reckoned among the Benedictine congregations, because while Bridget gave her nuns her own rule, she ordered that whatever might be found wanting should be supplied by the Rule of S. Benedict.

Married to Ulpho Prince of Novica, Bridget converted him by her "efficacious words," and before he died he became a Cistercian: so she built a monas-

[1] See *supra*, p. 105 *et seq.*
[2] See Carocci, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

tery on her estate of Wastein, under the rule of the Holy Saviour—S. Salvatore—which she said she had received from Him. The Order was a double one, and "the men were subject to the nuns of the related house . . . for the honour of our Lady".[1] Then, as the Breviary tells us, she "came to Rome, moved thereto by God," and there she brought much holiness. "She reproved the clergy with severity for the profane life they led, and freely announced to Gregory XI. the reform which God desired of the Church and Roman Court, threatening his near death and judgment at the tribunal of Jesus Christ if he should not obey."

Having won favour in Rome, she found Florence not slow to welcome her. The new Order was enriched by the city, many of the greatest families joining in the liberality of the Alberti. When, however, soon after, that family fell into disgrace and all its wealth and possessions were confiscated, the city did not spare even the patrimony of the new Order. So the Religious fled away, till in 1401 the Signoria ordered the restitution to the monks and nuns of Paradiso of all that which had been taken from them.

Later, Carocci tells us, in 1472 Brigida, daughter of Antonio Alberti, gave all her possessions to the monastery. In 1529 the place suffered in the siege, so that the religious again fled away, but they returned in 1530 to find their house ruined by the soldiery. The rule, however, seems to have become very lax, and we hear of the Pope discouraging novices, and in 1734 the Order was forbidden to take postulants, so that by 1776 the monastery had indeed ceased to exist; the few nuns left having taken themselves to the Convent of S. Ambrogio.

The church, now reduced to a chapel, is almost com-

[1] Tuker and Malleson, *Christian and Ecclesiastical Rome*, vol. iii., p. 118.

pletely lost sight of in the midst of the poor houses by which it is surrounded. You enter at No. 26 into a little court, adjoining the chapel. It is not, however, there that we can find to-day, amid the ruin, any vestige of ancient beauty, but in the church quite in this court, a mere barn, now utterly spoiled and ruined, where Spinello Aretino has painted very beautifully the life of Jesus Christ in fresco. Indeed, spoiled though they are, and surrounded by modern squalor and indifference, these frescoes are among the most surprising and lovely things beyond the city gates; and though they cannot now compare with the work of the same master near Antella, they have for us much of the same surprise.

Once more we return to Via Aretina, and following it come in about half a mile to the Badia di S. Bartolommeo a Ripoli, now just a parish church, for the old abbey has been destroyed. It was a nunnery as early as the eighth century, passing, when we do not know, to a company of monks who were living there in 1092. We are ignorant under what rule these cenobites lived, but they seem to have been of some military Order. By 1188 they were subject to the Abbot of Vallombrosa, and his rule was confirmed to him by Innocent III. in 1198 and again in 1204. It was not, however, till 1473 that the monastery became part of the Vallombrosan possessions. In that year it was converted into an infirmary for the monks of that congregation, and it remained such till in 1550 it became the residence of the General of the Order, and as such it was used till its suppression by the French in 1808.

There is but little to see to-day in the church, a few late pictures over the altars, the fifteenth century inlaid press in the sacristy, and a beautiful tabernacle, sculptured also in the fifteenth century.

In the great Piazza, before the Badia, we turn to the left, and then taking the second turning to the right come to the Church of S. Piero in Palco. "A church was built here long and long ago called S. Pietro in Bisarno, because what is now merely the highest part of the plain on this side Arno was then an island in the midst of the river. Restored many times, its greatest period seems to have been the fifteenth century when it was all painted within in fresco. The floods and the stupidity of man together have left but little of these beautiful works; indeed little is to be seen there to-day of what was doubtless once so glorious, but a few fragments of the story of the Blessed Virgin and the story of Sampietro. A few late works stand over the altars, but it is a fifteenth century bas-relief we see in the Antinori chapel, the second on the right, Madonna with our Lord in her arms, while in the sacristy is a small panel, part of the predella of some fourteenth century altar-piece.

Returning to the by-way, we follow it some hundred yards farther, and then where it meets another way we turn to the right, winding past the Antinori Villa, till at last, where we may, we turn to the left towards the Rovezzano ferry and then to the right by a pleasant road beside the river, which we follow, taking the road to the left after passing the weir, till in some two miles we reach on the lower slopes of the hills the Badia a Candeli.

The abbey, so beautifully set on the hillside among its olives and cypresses, was founded in the middle of the twelfth century, and before many years came into the hands of the Camaldolesi monks, who held it till 1526, when Clement VII. gave it to the Vallombrosans, who built a new abbey there. For the Camaldolesi Domenico Ghirlandajo painted an altar-piece, which, alas, has now been imprisoned in the Uffizi. And of

all the pictures that the monks once gathered here all that remains is a panel by Bicci di Lorenzo. Like the Abbey at Ripoli, S. Andrea a Candeli is to-day just a parish church, while the monastery has become the canonica.

A fine walk through the valley by the road, leaving the highway on the left and following the river upstream for a mile and a half, when, after crossing a little torrent, you turn uphill to the left by a by-way, coming in a quarter of a mile or so to Rignalla, should not be missed.

Rignalla was a stronghold of the Abati, who, till the fourteenth century, were the patrons of the little church of S. Maria there. In 1441, however, as an inscription, a copy, Carocci says, of an old one, tells us, the Conte Spinelli and Tommaso, his brother, caused the church to be rebuilt. On the façade we find the Spinelli arms, and beside the church a tabernacle with a fine fifteenth century fresco of S. Thomas and our Lord with S. Jerome and S. Francis. Nothing of much interest remains within; only a coloured stucco relief of the fifteenth century perhaps, where we see Madonna with Christ in her lap.

From Rignalla we continue on our way uphill, till, where the by-way we have followed meets the highroad, we turn to the right, returning by the hills to the Badia a Candeli.

Just before reaching the church a by-way leaves the main road to the left, uphill, towards Vicchio di Rimaggio. It is scarcely more than half a mile from Candeli. Vicchio di Rimaggio was undoubtedly built close to a Roman *Vico:* and while only the church has any interest for us to-day, the whole village is of very ancient origin. S. Lorenzo, however, in spite of numerous restorations, keeps still something of its early character. The portico, for instance, is at least as old

THE NAVE AT ROVEZZANO

as the fifteenth century, and then there are still left two frescoes there, a lunette with the half figure of S. Lorenzo between two angels, and a *tondo* with a youthful saint praying. Within, the walls were of old covered with frescoes, the remains of which were uncovered some fourteen years ago, so that we see now on the right the Nativity of our Lord, painted in 1480 Carocci tells us,[1] and in other parts of the church the life of the Blessed Virgin and the life of S. Lorenzo.

Something, however, more than these beautiful shadows remain to us from the days when the church was as it were the palace of the poor. For over the first altar on the right is a picture on a gold ground of the Virgin enthroned with our Lord in her arms and around her stand S. Antonio Abate, S. Niccolò di Bari, S. Martino and S. Lucia.[2] Over the second altar is a very ancient panel representing Madonna enthroned, probably from the thirteenth century. In the choir are two tabernacles of the fifteenth century (1480), while over the high altar is a curious crucifix that has been attributed to Donatello, but that is certainly no longer his work. The sacristy still keeps its beautiful *lavabo*, exquisitely sculptured by some artist of the quattrocento with figures of angels and flowers and fruit.

Returning to the by-road by which we came, we follow it till at the first turning to the right we leave it, and following the new road for something less than a mile take the second turning to the left, coming presently to the village and church of Quarto, only a few hundred yards from Bagno a Ripoli, where you may find the tram for Florence. This village of Quarto stood above the fourth milestone on the old road to

[1] *Cf.* Carocci, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., p. 40.

[2] Carocci (*op. cit.*, vol. ii., p. 41) thinks this picture is of the school of Lorenzo di Niccolò.

Rome; hence its name. Its church of S. Maria dates, it is said, from the eighth century,[1] but what of antiquity is left to it seems to be work of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It is to the latter that the picture of Madonna with our Lord is owing that to-day stands over the altar on the north.

[1] Carocci, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., p. 47, and Moreni agrees; but Repetti, *op. cit.*, vol. iv., p. 691, says: "Se ignorasi l'epoca della fondazione di questa ultima chiesa, attualmente rifatta, è noto pero che essa esistiva fino dal sec. xiii. . . ."

XVI

FROM FIESOLE TO SALETTA, MONTEREGGI, THE CONVENT OF S. MARIA MADDALENA IN VAL DI MUGNONE, S. ANDREA A SVEGLIA, S. LORENZO A BASCIANO AND FONTELUCENTE[1]

THE country behind Fiesole, the Val di Mugnone, under Monte Senario, is one of the most beautiful and one of the most interesting of the valleys in the Fiorentino. Far more bare and wild than the Val d'Arno or any of the valleys which from the Florentine plain run southward into the Sanese, it is perhaps less known than any of them, yet it offers to the traveller a variety of scenery and a number of churches that are seldom without some priceless picture or statue, and are certainly not inferior to anything which may be found

[1] This walk, too, can for the most part be driven. To visit S. Andrea de Sveglia, S. Bastiano and S. Lorenzo a Basciano, the carriage can either be sent on to the ford about a mile beyond Le Caldine toward Fiesole, thus entailing a walk of two miles and a half, or returning from S. Maria Maddalena a mile along the Via Faenza to where the road to S. Andrea a Sveglia leaves it on the left, it can be easily followed through that village and S. Bastiano, the Via Faenza being found again at Le Caldine, omitting S. Lorenzo a Basciano altogether. By carriage the Via Faenza should then be followed into Florence and the climb up to Fiesole abandoned.

nearer to the city. Altogether hidden from Florence by the great hills of Fiesole, the Val di Mugnone is served very poorly by the single line of railway which crosses the Apennines to Faenza, and which in this enclosed valley begins its ascent. And because of the winding of the line doubling through many a tunnel back on itself there is really in all the valley but one station, that at Le Caldine, for by the time the line reaches Montorsoli on the Via Bolognese it has wound quite out of the valley of the Mugnone. It is, happily, still the road which serves this strong and secret country, hidden away between Monte Senario and Fiesole, the heights of Montereggi, some two thousand feet above the sea, and that line of hills which on the north separates the Mugnone from the Terzollina.

Leaving the tram on the hilltop at Fiesole, you follow again Via Ferrucci,[1] till in about a mile and a half coming to Via Giovanni Leader, which before you took, now you refuse it, keeping straight on; though when in a few yards thence the road forks, you keep to the left, refusing, however, a little farther on a way that leads under the cypresses down into the valley. The highway you are on, winding round the hillside, leads at last to Montereggi, and all along the way there opens before you a marvellous view of hill and mountain and valley, closed on the north by the towering mass of Monte Senario with its wooded convent shining against the sky, on the west by Monte Morello and the low, beautiful hills that come down from Pratolino towards the city between Terzollina and Mugnone, while southward Fiesole shuts out Florence, and on the east the hills rise to the Piana di S. Clemente.

It is a walk of some two miles from the corner of Via Giovanni Leader to Saletta, that little village which

[1] See p. 60 *et seq.*

stands just under the highway on the hills, the pink belfry of its tiny church being indeed but a stone's throw from the road. A good part of this country from very ancient times, from 890 certainly, has been in the possession of the Bishops of Fiesole, by a gift, as it is said, of Guido, King of Italy.[1] The *corte* called Sala or Saletta, is especially mentioned in the document referred to by Repetti—*Sala sub castro Faesulae*—and was confirmed to the bishops with the rest of this country by Otho II. in 984, by Pope Paschalis II. in 1103, and Pope Innocent II. in 1134. The great secular lords of this country on the slopes of Monte-reggi seem to have been the Caponsacchi, who, as Villani tells us, dwelt in Florence, "near the Mercato Vecchio and were Fiesolan magnates,"[2] in Cacciaguida's time—

> Già era il Caponsacco nel mercato
> Disceso giù da Fiesole.[3]

They were certainly patrons of the Church of S. Margherita a Saletta, which, small as it is, is not without its treasures, for some pupil of Andrea della Robbia has carved there a Madonna adoring her little Son, one of the most charming works of the school in all this valley.

Returning to the highroad and continuing on our way, we come in another half-mile to a tabernacle on the right, where a road leaves the way to the left just beyond the Villa Monetti.

Villa Monetti, for all its look of modernity, is very old, and though it does not seem ever to have belonged to the Caponsacchi, it was for five centuries, Carocci tells us, in the possession of the great Florentine family

[1] See Repetti, *op. cit.*, vol. iii., p. 499.
[2] Villani, *Cronica*, lib. iv., cap. ii.
[3] Dante, *Paradiso*, xvi., 121-22.

of Busini, who, always to the fore from the earliest times when fighting was on hand, even in the sixteenth century defended Florence with all their might during the great siege. The family became extinct in the first years of the eighteenth century, the property here passing to Piero Filippo Uguccioni.

It is scarcely more than half a mile from Villa Monetti to the Pieve di S. Ilario a Montereggi. As we have seen, it was one of the Kings of Italy who gave all this country to the Bishops of Fiesole, and it is from them that Montereggi gets its name, Mons Regis, the King's Hill as we might say. One of the most ancient churches in the diocese of Fiesole, S. Ilario, was certainly in the fourteenth century in the patronage of another Florentine family, the Baldovinetti, whose arms are still on the façade. It possesses almost nothing either beautiful or interesting, for its antiquity has been hidden by innumerable restorations, and the only work of art which remains to it is a ciborium from the fifteenth century.

The real interest of Montereggi lies to-day in its aqueduct, for, as Repetti tells us, it has for centuries supplied the great aqueduct of Fiesole and under the Grand Dukes the Fountain in the Piazza del Granduca, as he calls it, the Piazza Signoria as we should say, with water. The inexhaustible springs of Montereggi are gathered here into a canal and led into the bed of the Mugnone, turning five mills on their way. The work was perfected, for by that time part of Florence was dependent upon these springs, by Leopoldo I., who built a new conduit which brought water not only to the fountains, but to the Grand Ducal houses, and the Spedale di S. Maria Nuova. Nor has the modern city less need than of old of the Fonti di Montereggi, the city to-day being indeed more than ever dependent upon them.

From Montereggi we return on our way so far as the tabernacle by Villa Monetti: there turning down to the right, we follow a winding road into the valley. In about a quarter of a mile, passing thus through the woods and vineyards, we come to a great Casa Colonica standing beside the way on the left among the olives. Casa delle Monache a Ripoli, the peasants call it, and indeed it was a sister house of the Dominican nuns of S. Jacopo di Ripoli. A few hundred yards farther on we come upon one of the mills, Il Mulino Nuovo, that were driven from the aqueduct of Montereggi, and following thus about and about through the vineyards and olive gardens, in another half-mile we find ourselves on the Via Faentina. Turning, here in the valley, left along the highway, back towards Fiesole, it is some three-quarters of a mile along this great and ancient way to the little Convent of S. Maria Maddalena *in Pian di Mugnone.*

Here by the wayside, on the verge of the olive gardens, I ate my mid-day meal in the company of a poor man who was going to Faenza. We had, indeed, no market of dainties there, but, as Petrarch describes, "a poet's banquet and that not of Juvenal's or Flaccus' kind, but the pastoral sort that Virgil describes: 'mellow apples, soft chestnuts and rich store of milky curd,'" and that we found at a cottage hard by. The rest was harder fare: a coarse, stiff loaf. . . . But why make a long story: you guess the roughness of both place and fare, and indeed as the parasite in Plautus wittily says, I needed shoes not only on my feet, but on my teeth also.

Lying there in the sunshine in the heat of the early afternoon, we began to talk of the way, for the Via Faentina lay before us, and my companion was, as I have said, on his way to Faenza.

Presently he went on his road and I on mine, he

eastward, and I west. And as I went, slowly because of the sun, I fell to thinking of the way he had come, of the way he must go.

The Via Faenza or Faentina leaves Florence by the same gate, Porta S. Gallo, as the Via Bolognese, the two separate just outside the city, the Via Faenza crossing Ponte Rosso and climbing eastward by the right bank of the Mugnone, passing through the *borgo* di S. Marco Vecchio to the Ponte alla Badia, where it crosses the torrent just under S. Domenico. It winds with the river round the western base of the Fiesolan hills, and, keeping to the valley of the Mugnone for many miles, crosses the hills at last at L'Olmo under Monte Senario, where it enters the valley of the Sieve. It crosses that stream, too, by a bridge, just before Borgo S. Lorenzo, climbing the Apennines by Ronta and Raggiolo to Colla di Casaglia, whence it descends into the transapennine valley of the Lamone. It follows the Lamone downwards through Marradi and Brisighella for the most part on the right bank to the city of Faenza in the great plain, where it joins the Æmilian Way, for Bologna or Rimini.

Why has no learned poet of our day written a book *De Viis*, on the old roads of Italy? There is not one of them but has its story. And truly I for one cannot walk a mile along any one of them without curiosity as to its birth and destination. Yet I might seem, in this also, to be alone in my love. There is the Via Francigena, our fathers knew it well, that leads from Gaul to Rome,[1] but that is a mediæval way. Why has no one ever sung the adventures of Via Appia, Via Æmilia, Via Latina or Via Flaminia. They are human enough and have long memories. Whence do they

[1] For a page on this mediæval highway, see *In Unknown Tuscany*, by Edward Hutton, with notes by William Heywood (Methuen, 1909.)

come, whither do they go, across the mountains and through the valleys? Is it Rome or Ravenna or only Gaul that waits them at the end? What cities have they seen, what hills have they crossed, how many bridges of the Romans may they count like quarterings in an ancient coat to prove their nobility. Perhaps the Legions thundered once along them, perhaps the pilgrims once sought Jesus by those endless ways, or in the wake of some carnival army a child wandered through a summer day, seeking its mother, borne away to the Eternal City.

There is a road in Umbria, and indeed it is the Via Flaminia itself, which, as I know who have loved it above every other road in Italy, entering that sacred and beautiful country at Nocera (Norceria Camellana) passes through S. Giovanni Profiamma (Forum Flaminii), Foligno (Fulginium), Bevagna (Mevania), and crossing the Monti Martini and the Giano comes into the valley again at Narni, where suddenly it comes to an end half-way across the river, there where the old beautiful bridge has been broken now these many centuries.

Wandering one autumn day along the road from Pesaro to Urbino,—and it is a difficult road,—I remembered all at once the way I was on, Via Flaminia, and that broken bridge at Narni far and far across the mountains. It was as though I was aware of a tragedy which was about to happen, a tragedy of which the chief actor had no knowledge. As that brave and ancient way pushed on up that difficult hill and I thought in my heart of the greatness of the Furlo Pass beyond, and of the mountains after Cagli, a sort of despair seized me. Why all this struggle, why this desperate persistence and resolve? Via Flaminia would never reach the Eternal City. Long and long ago it fell almost in sight of the Campagna by the Nar.

[1] Sulfurea Nar albus aqua fontesque velini.

To those who have lived long with them, the roads of Italy at any rate have much of the humanity of the living world, they too are a part of life. If you follow them they will lead you where you would be, but their price is weariness and you must walk in the dust. If it be Faenza you set out for, be sure for all the hills, for all the windings by the way, you will win to it at last—to Faenza. It is only before the Eternal City there stands a broken bridge.

So I, thinking of the way, came to the little Convent of S. Maria Maddalena. It stands above Via Faenza on the left, some half a mile towards Florence from the point where I joined it coming down from the hills. To-day a mere "national monument," it once belonged to the Dominican Friars of S. Marco in the city, who as we may remember at the bidding of Eugenius IV. and Cosimo de' Medici came down from S. Domenico under Fiesole to take possession of that convent in the city of which the Pope had just deprived the Sylvestrians.[1]

Before the middle of the fifteenth century there was a small *spedaletto* here by the roadside, in the possession of the Cresci family, and it was one of them, Andrea di Cresci, who in 1460 "per l' amore di Dio, e onore di S. Maria Maddalena," gave the *spedaletto* certain lands hereabout. Later the family gave the place to the Friars of S. Marco, who turned it into a small convent to which they sent such of their brethren as were sick.[2] They held it till the stupid suppression of all such places.

Spoiled though it is, a tiny girls' school to-day, it keeps much of its beauty still about it. Built, if not by Michelozzo himself—he who built S. Marco—cer-

[1] See my *Florence and Northern Tuscany* (Methuen, 1907), pp. 206-9.

[2] *Cf.* Carocci, *op. cit.*, vol. i., p. 174.

tainly in his manner, the cloister is now dark and neglected, and the church a good deal restored. It is, however, not altogether stripped of its treasures, for there, over the high altar, you may see a lovely Giottesque picture on a gold ground of Madonna enthroned, seated on a crimson cushion, dressed in a blue robe, and in her arms is the Jesus Parvulus Himself, who gives us His blessing; and on either side three angels wait, two of them swinging censers the while. Above is the Annunciation.

Nor is this the only treasure of the church. "On the 22nd September, 1515," a document tells us, still preserved among the records of the old *ospizio*, "on the 22nd September, 1515, the figures of the Presepio were set up, to wit a Virgin clothed in black and a Joseph clothed in blue with the Child, and the ass and ox upon the hay, executed by the hand of Andrea della Robbia from alms procured and given by Frate Roberto Salviati."[1] The greater part of these figures still remains in the church in a sort of cave or cupboard with a window looking into the nave on the south side near the door. Restored though they are, and re-painted and spoiled, they can, as it might seem, in spite of the document, never have been from Andrea's own hand, for indeed they are but the poorest school pieces.[2]

[1] Libro Deb. e Cred. dell Ospizio di S. Maria Maddalena in Pian di Mugnone de' Frati di S. Marco, fol. 112. Quoted by Milanesi, *Vasari*, ii., 180, note 1. "*Ricordo come adi 22 di settembre 1515 si missono le figure del presepio cioè una Vergine vestita di nero et uno Giuseppe vestito d' azzurro col Bambino et l'asino et il bue in sul fieno facto per mano di Andrea della Robbia di elemosine procurate et date da Frate Roberto Salviati.*"

[2] Maud Cruttwell, *Luca and Andrea della Robbia, and their successors* (Dent, 1902), pp. 200-1. Miss Cruttwell says that Signor Carocci "assures me that there is no room for doubt," that the figures we see to-day are the same as those the docu-

But the curious, and to us at least, most interesting fact connected with this work is that the figures missing here at S. Maria Maddalena, namely, the figures of the Kings and an angel, though not the ox and the ass, are in part to be found in the Museum of the University of Oxford. The fragments collected there consist of "the upper parts of three figures, those of the elder and younger Kings . . . one clad in red and the other in blue, and of an angel, all painted in oils". They formed part of the collection of the late Mr. Drury Fortnum, who gives the following interesting note in his own catalogue: "Fragments of the last work executed by Andrea della Robbia, and erected in a small church in the valley of the Mugnone (S. Maria Maddalena) in 1515. It represented the Adoration of the Magi; a large group of figures painted, not enamelled. It fell from the wall, probably from an earthquake, and was broken. A portion is still there arranged as a Presepio; these and other fragments were found by me thrown aside as valueless."

It would certainly be foolish, as Miss Cruttwell suggests, to hold Andrea responsible for all the works sent out from his *bottega* in his old age. In 1515 he was eighty years of age, and it is certain he had no hand in the production of this mediocre work. Some pupil of Fra Bartolommeo has painted in fresco an Annunciation over the window through which one now looks at the spurious work of Andrea della Robbia.

Leaving S. Maria Maddalena and returning to the highroad, a little above the convent on the other side of the way stands a house and beside it a path leading down to a ford across the Mugnone. Passing over the torrent there and crossing the railway and

ment speaks of. "He adds that only a couple of years ago the figures were entirely concealed by draperies of stuffs and silks."

more than one great ditch, we climb up to the little church on the hill-top, S. Bastiano. There is almost nothing to be seen there, as I found, yet the view both east and west is so fine that I was repaid for my climb. And then, just as I was turning away, a woman came towards me, a child in her arms, and seeing me peering about the church, inquired what I sought. "A picture," said I, "a picture or a fresco. Is it, then, that you have nothing here beautiful or precious?" She looked over the beautiful valley, then, half-shyly turning to me, she looked me straight in the face. "Sissignore," said she, "if the Signore will so far trouble himself." And she turned towards the hill. Half-reluctantly I followed her.

"Sissignore," said she, "in the house of my father there is a Madonna—if the Signore will care to visit her?"

The child stirred in her arms and I made as though to play with it as we went, but it turned away its head, hiding it in its mother's arm.

"He is shy, Signore. Excuse him then—Beppino, Beppino, be not so shamefaced."

So we went on together, till not far away we came to a house very bare and poor. Before the door stood, nevertheless, one of the most lovely of those girls who are the happiness of Tuscany. She was tall and well built, and her eyes, which glanced swiftly at me under her hair, and that was almost gold, fell suddenly as we approached.

"Is the father within, Annunziatina?" asked my guide.

"But, yes—enter then."

"This Signore would see the Madonna."

When I turned away after looking at that beautiful *trecento* picture where Madonna was enthroned with her Son in her arms, and four angels stood on guard,

I found a little group standing in a half-circle, waiting patiently for my opinion. At one end stood the mother, an oldish woman, her eyes fixed on my face, next to her was her son, a man of some thirty years, beside him stood his father, an old fellow some seventy years old, and beside him again, Annunziatina herself, her eyes on the floor; between them and myself stood my guide, hushing her child to sleep.

There was silence. Presently the father said, "It does not please the Signore?"

"But, yes," said I, "how should it not please me since it is so beautiful," and I looked at Annunziatina where she stood like a frightened fawn, absolutely motionless. Presently she took a deep breath.

Again there was silence. What is it then I asked myself, I do not understand. Why should they care what I think of the picture?

"Yes," I said, turning to the old man, "it is very beautiful. Fortunate indeed are they who have so much treasure in the house."

"Does the Signore wish to be thus fortunate?"

"I? I do not understand."

"Will the Signore buy this treasure?"

How stupid I am, I thought; why, of course, the old rogue was simply leading me on. But there were tears in his eyes. Annunziatina still stood like a statue, absolutely motionless, her eyes on the ground.

"*Che, Che,*" said I. "I cannot buy your gods."

"Signore, it is all we have."

A long silence followed. For a time I stood looking at them, then I turned away. "I also am poor," said I. "What do you ask for it?"

The old man made a step towards me. "Signore," said he eagerly, "it is like this. Listen to me, Signore. When I said it was all we have I spoke the truth. It is our treasure; moreover, it is the *dote* of

Annunziatina here. Signore, unless we sell it, we cannot marry her, and . . . we would marry her quickly while we live."

The girl stood looking on the floor, quite motionless, only her cheeks were stained, and by the quickness of her breathing one might know the tumult in her heart.

Again there was silence. Presently the old man said almost despairingly, "Will the Signore not buy it then? Alas, that it should be so beautiful and yet without value," and he looked fiercely at it.

"I will buy it," I said, "if Annunziatina wishes it."

She looked up swiftly. "I, Signore, I . . . Oh no, I do not wish it at all. It has been there ever since I can remember," and she rushed from the room weeping.

"Alas, these women!" said the old man. "Listen, Signore, she would give her eyes for Ulisse, but he . . . how can he take her without a *soldo*."

"Well," said I, driven against a wall, "well, what do you ask then?"

"What you will."

I gave him what I had then and the next day more again when I sent to fetch the picture. . . .

Who knows what Annunziatina will think of it in that little house of hers when she awakes there for the first time and finds it beside her bed.

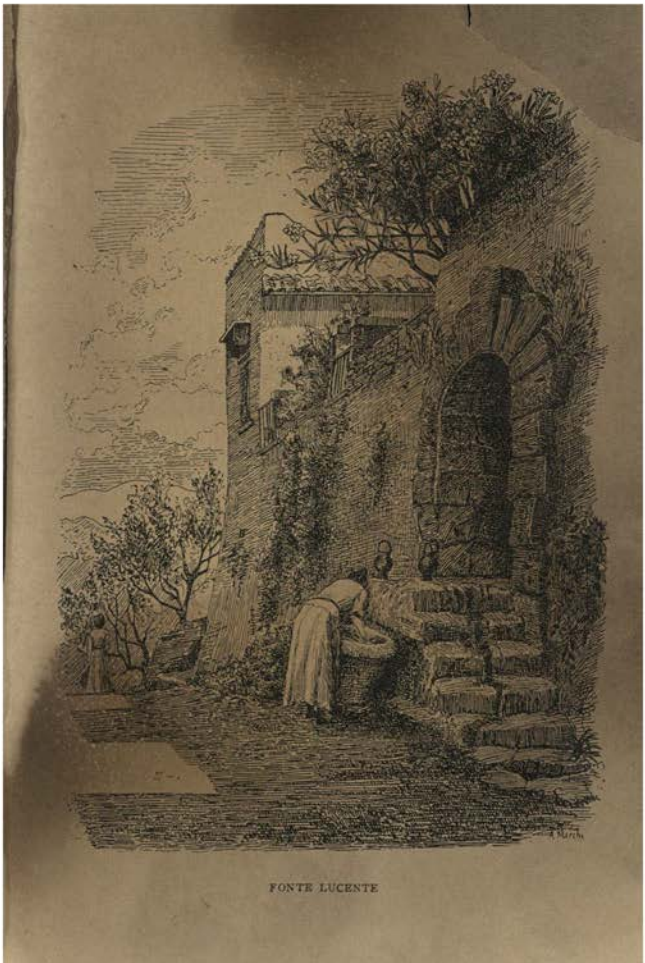
From San Bastiano to S. Lorenzo a Basciano is a walk of a mile or more. You follow the road downwards, then when you come to a country road that crosses it at the foot of the hill you turn up by a by-path through the olives and vines on the right, that leads you presently, winding under the little village there, just a group of houses, to the church itself. Very small and very ancient, it holds still a picture in the manner of Ghirlandajo, painted in 1480 for Francesco

di Bartolommeo Martellini. It is a picture of Madonna enthroned you find there with our Lord in her arms and round her stand many saints, S. Caterina of Alexandria, S. Giuliano, S. Bartolommeo, S. Francesco of Assisi, S. Sebastiano and S. Lorenzo.

The road from S. Lorenzo a Basciano runs downhill all the way into the valley towards Fiesole. Crossing the Mugnone by a ford about half a mile below the village of Caldine, you come once more to Via Faenza, which you follow now homewards through the beautiful *gola* till under the hill of Fiesole, just as the highway is about to be crossed for the first time by the railway, you leave it, climbing by a road to the left up to the Oratorio del Crocifisso di Fontelucente, which, built at the end of the seventeenth century to take the place of an older shrine, still keeps its crucifix of stone. In the chapel on the left is a very lovely picture of the end of the *trecento*, representing the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin who gives her girdle to S. Thomas. It comes from the old destroyed church of S. Giovanni Decollato.[1]

From this beautiful place you may turn to the left, climbing thus up under the old Etruscan walls to the Piazza beside the Duomo of Fiesole, whence the tram will take you to Florence; or, continuing on your way by a road less difficult, come to S. Domenico in something over a mile: and so to Florence in the plain.

[1] *Cf.* A. Guerri, *Fiesole e il suo Comune* (Firenze, 1897), p. 71.



FONTE LUCENTE

XVII

THREE VILLAS AND A ROMANCE OF THE PEERAGE OF ENGLAND

THE two great Medici villas at Castello, Villa di Castello and Villa della Petraja, stand among the woods on the last slopes of Quarto and Quinto, the fourth and fifth milestones on the Strada di Prato, so lately renamed Via Vittorio Emanuele. You leave Florence, by tramway, as for Rifredi at the Porta al Prato, and in about half an hour come to the little town of Castello scattered along the way. Turning thence, out of the highway to the right, in a few minutes you find yourself facing the long, low villa of Castello. The name of the villa, *di Castello*, according to Repetti, is derived from the Latin *castellum*, meaning a cistern of water. "Macrinus, Albinus, Gneus Pompeius, and Marcius," says Villani,[1] "came from Rome to the city (Florentia) which Caesar was building . . . Macrinus caused the water to be brought in conduits and aqueducts from a distance of seven miles from the city, so that the people might have abundance of good water to drink and might keep the place clean; and this conduit was carried from the river called

[1] Villani, *Cronica*, lib. i., cap. 38.

Marina at the foot of Monte Morello, gathering to itself all the springs above Sesto and Quinto and Colonnata." And Domenico Manni, in his *Le Terme Fiorentine*, speaks of the ruins of the aqueducts remaining near Castello and other places in the middle of the eighteenth century.

Built, as Vasari tells us, by Pier Francesco de' Medici, the son of Cosimo the Elder's brother Lorenzo, he was a patron of Botticelli, who painted for him both the Birth of Venus and the Primavera, which hung here at Castello till they were placed in the galleries.

The great beauty of Castello to-day, however, is the garden which lies behind the villa. There between the woods some sixteenth century architect has laid out what is really a formal garden, yet it is so scattered with flowers and shaded by trees, so lovely with lawns and glowing with oleanders, that it seems less precise than indeed it is. Then suddenly at a turning of the way between the beeches you come upon a great terrace at the top of a flight of low wide steps where a fountain, silent now, used to play perhaps for Cosimo the Grand Duke, which Caterina Sforza certainly has seen and heard. All about it are set strange statues of the "ladies and gentlemen of the Medici family" masquerading as Romans, it might seem, in the toga and the dresses of old Rome.

The fountain itself—half bronze, half marble—may well be a work of Giovanni Bologna, though Vasari gives it to Tribolo. Above, Ammanati it seems has set on a high pedestal Hercules wrestling with Antaeus, and below on the edge of the great basin and at the foot of the great pedestal are *putti* lying at full length and playing with the water, or seated laughing together watching it rise up like a silver lily and fall like a shower of snow.

And then there are strange corners, grottoes and recesses here filled with fantastic animals, a unicorn, a camel with a monkey on its back, a wild boar or lion, a ram, a bear, a stag, dogs and such, together with a multitude of smaller creatures; while under the roof are set grinning masks and baskets of flowers, and patterns of sea-shells. You are bewildered by all this fantastic menagerie till you remember that here the children of the Grand Dukes often spent the summer—those long, hot, brilliant days when the world is full of silence and there is nothing to do but to wait for the evening and the coolness after the sunset. Well, it was perhaps to amuse those who are never at rest that these grottoes were fashioned into a great Noah's ark.

And then for the young men and maidens there was the labyrinth. No one cares for such things now, yet even in England once they were full of mystery and surprises, the fantastic puzzles of a world which refused even kisses unless they were by stealth. How often in those facile and disastrous days of Cosimo I. must those who had come with him so easily into a kingdom have passed here the cool of the day, the garden echoing with their beautiful names, Maddalena, Giovanna, Annunziata, Maria, Esmerelda, Ippolyta, Bianca, Francesca. And close by, as though at the mercy of their joy, lay Tribolo's fantastic, hideous, helpless bronze of the Apennine.

Perhaps, however, the most memorable personage, certainly the strongest personality of her time, who has wandered through these gardens, is Caterina Sforza, widow of Girolamo Riario, widow of Giovanni de' Medici, the mother of Giovanni delle Bande Nere and grandmother of Cosimo I. An illegitimate daughter of the Galeazzo Sforza of Milan, at eleven years of age she had been betrothed to Girolamo Riario and after the

murder of her father she married him. "As she issued from her litter," says [illegible] Oliva, "it seemed as though the sun had come out, so rarely beautiful did she seem, laden with silver and gold and jewels, but still more striking from her natural loveliness. Her hair, wreathed in the manner of a coronet, was brighter than the gold with which it was entwined. Her forehead of burnished ivory almost reflected the beholder. Her eyes sparkled behind the mantling crimson of her cheeks as morning stars amid those many-tinted lilies which returning dawn scatters along the horizon."[1] In 1488, when Girolamo was murdered, he whom she so heroically avenged, her son Ottaviano was proclaimed by her Count of Forlì. Then she married Giacomo Fea, that comrade who had held for her and with her help the Citadel of Forlì against the murderers of Count Girolamo. Giacomo Fea, however, in 1496 was murdered by the same gang of ruffians, and she punished them, too, as she had punished their predecessors. Then Giovanni de' Medici, the son of Pier Francesco by Laudamia Acciajuoli, envoy of Florence at her court, married her, and, dying soon after, left her with a son still a baby. Cesare Borgia, however, had set his heart on Forlì, and even from Caterina Sforza would take no denial; yet she forced him to win it by treachery. He made her his prisoner and sent her to Rome. She was presently allowed to retire to Florence, where she devoted herself to the education of her little son, not without fear, it seems, of his assassination, for she sent him away to a nunnery, where "dressed as a girl and jealously guarded by the faithful," the future soldier, Giovanni delle Bande Nere—the last of the great *condottieri*—passed eight months. Later, he returned to his mother at Castello. "So you have your boy

[1] *Cf.* Janet Ross, *Florentine Villas* (Dent, 1902), p. 67.

back," writes an old follower of her husband whom she had commissioned to procure "a small and handsome horse" for Giovanni, then just seven years old. "If my father had come to life again I could not be more glad; and so it is with all the *condottieri* here in camp. The day your letter arrived the commissary was so overjoyed that he could not eat. As to the horse, we will search among the *condottieri* here, and whosoever has one will be only too proud to give it. We shall, without fail, find what you want."[1]

In 1527 Castello suffered much from the armies of the League and the Bourbons, and after the siege fell into the hands of Cosimo I., whose mother, Maria Salviati, died here. It is to Cosimo almost all the decorations, the gardens and the statues we see are owing. For him Tribolo carved and Pontormo painted, and here he spent his time with Camilla Martelli, the wife he had secretly married for fear of public opinion.

It is a beautiful walk of half a mile through the ilex woods from Villa di Castello to Villa della Petraja. On the way you pass the little church of S. Michele with a delicate bell tower.

The Villa della Petraja, so close to Villa di Castello and yet so different from it, towers above the plain of which it affords many a fine view, while from the windows you may see, not far away, the towers and domes of Florence.

Petraja is much older than Villa di Castello. So early as 1314 the Brunelleschi[2] who owned it held it against Sir John Hawkwood and the Pisans. This was during the successful raid on the Florentine *contado* of the White Company with all Pisa behind it.

[1] See Pasolini, *Caterina Sforza* (Firenze, 1893), vol. ii., p. 321, and Janet Ross, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

[2] The great architect and sculptor did not belong to this family.

"The Germans," writes Scipio Ammirato,[1] "the Pisan despoilers and the English, encamped at Sesto and Colonnata on their way back from the Mugello,[2] and spreading over the slopes of Monte Morello took S. Stefano in Pane. Here they remained some days devastating the villas which they burned down over a radius of three miles. The son of Boccaccio Brunelleschi, a most valorous youth, then secured Petraja. . . . The villa being therefore well defended by the young Brunelleschi, who showed no sign of surrendering, the enemy determined to take it by force, with the intention of cutting the defenders to pieces and razing the building to the ground. The English first undertook the work and advanced in fine order with the greatest ferocity, carrying ladders and catapults as though they had to storm the walls of Florence itself. But all was in vain. Some were killed, many others were burned and wounded. The Germans then determined to try their luck, and made a second assault as furious as any castle ever underwent. Neither more nor less happened to them, than what had befallen the English. So they determined with combined force to assault the villa a third time, and to their shame and the everlasting glory of the Brunelleschi they were once more repulsed."

Ammirato seems persuaded that the great four-sided tower we see to-day, rebuilt certainly by Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici, is the same that was so well defended in 1364, but it does not seem to be so, and indeed Repetti[3] denies it. Piero de' Brunelleschi left the place to the Servite Fathers, who took possession

[1] Ammirato, *Storia di Firenze* (Firenze), p. 638; *cf.* also Janet Ross, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

[2] For an account of this campaign, see my *Florence and Northern Tuscany* (Methuen, 1907), pp. 98-99.

[3] Repetti, *op. cit.*, vol. iv., p. 139.

of it in 1372; but by the beginning of the fifteenth century, the Strozzi owned Petraja, losing it in the time of Cosimo de' Medici.[1] From Cosimo Pater Patriae to Cosimo I. we hear little of Petraja. "Cosimo I.," says Mrs. Ross, "lived much at Petraja, and wishing to have Varchi near him to enjoy his sweet converse, lent him La Topaja, a small villa on the hillside above Petraja. Poets, artists and strangers of note who came to Florence, toiled up the steep road to visit the great historian, and Varchi must often have entertained there the celebrated courtesan, Tullia d'Aragona, whose portrait at Brescia by Bonvicino fully justifies the passionate verses addressed to her by so many poets of that time."

Occhi belli,
Occhi leggiadri, occhi amorosi e cari,
Più che le stelle belle e più che il sole,

writes Muzio, while Ercole Bentivoglio indited sonnets to her celestial brow. Tasso called her "*La mia Signora*," and Alessandro Arrighi praised her nice conversation, her most rare beauty, and her singing which could turn a marble statue into flesh and blood. Born in Rome, the daughter of Cardinal Luigi d'Aragona, and educated in Siena and Florence, she aspired to be a second Sappho. "Varchi," Mrs. Ross tells us, "in spite of the silvered hair he talks so much of, evidently succumbed to the charms of the beautiful woman, and even when love had cooled into a platonic friendship he continued to polish and sometimes to re-write, in his elegant scholarly language, the sonnets and verses of the lovely Tullia. Her reputation as a

[1] Whether Palla Strozzi lost it when his estates were confiscated after the return of Cosimo, or whether, as seems likely, it remained to the family till the rebellion of Filippo Strozzi cost them everything, is uncertain. *Cf.* Repetti, *op. cit.*, vol. iv., p. 149.

poetess induced Cosimo to excuse her from wearing the yellow veil, odious sign of her profession. The sonnet sent with her petition, which is still in the state archives of Florence, bears *Farseli gratia per poetessa* in his handwriting on the margin. In her old age she became devout and was a protegée of the pious Duchess Eleanora of Toledo, wife of Cosimo. Tullia's poem, 'Guercino il Meschino,' . . . was written about this time." In the preface she rates Boccaccio roundly for "the improper, indecent and truly abominable things" in his book, and wonders how people calling themselves Christians can have his name mentioned without making the sign of the Cross. "Yet," she continues, "so corrupt is our nature that the book is not avoided as an abomination, but run after by all." Truly, if that is conversion, we know it.

The great days of Petraja came with Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici, whose favourite residence it was. It was for him that Buontalenti enlarged the villa and set out the garden. Later as Grand Duke, married to Cristina of Lorraine, he seems to have spent all his time here, all the time he could spare from Florence. There, too, Scipione Ammirato, "the modern Livy," wrote the famous *Storia di Firenze*.

The gardens are beautiful with their roses and carnations, their ilexes and cypresses, their terraces and fountains. The great fountain on the east, Tribolo's masterpiece, Grand Duke Pietro Leopold brought here from Castello. "There he carved," says Vasari, "on the marble base a mass of sea-monsters . . . with tails so curiously twisted that nothing better can be done in that style: having finished it, he took a marble basin brought to Castello long before . . . and in the throat near the edge of the said basin he made a circle of dancing boys holding certain festoons of marine creatures carved with excellent imagination

out of the marble; also the stem to go above the said basin he executed with much grace, with boys and masks for spouting out water, of great beauty, and on the top of this stem he placed a huge female figure, to represent Florence, . . . of which figure he had made a most beautiful model, where one might see her wringing the water out of her hair with her hands." This statue, however, seems in spite of Vasari, to be the work of Giovanni da Bologna.

Precise and beautiful as both these great Medici houses are, they have not for me, at least, the interest that Villa Corsini has, that palace which lies below Petraja on the way back to the Strada di Prato. It is a far cry from Kenilworth to Florence, yet time has compassed it. First in the possession of the Strozzi, who, it seems, in the middle of the fifteenth century sold it to the Rinieri, about a century later Villa Corsini came into the hands of Francesco Sangalletti, whose possessions were confiscated by Cosimo I. and sold to Pagolo Donati in 1597. After further changes and vicissitudes it came again into Medici hands, Cosimo, the son of Grand Duke Ferdinando I., getting possession of it.

Its interest for us, however, does not lie in these its possessors and certainly not in itself, for it is merely a rather fine baroque building about a great courtyard; the gardens redeeming it from a sort of vulgarity that is yet, however strange that may seem, not without a certain charm. No, we should pass by villa and gardens too, though with a word of praise perhaps, for Petraja and Castello are so near; but since Villa Corsini has harboured an English nobleman, of great descent, of great worth, too, as I think, and an exile, it deserves from us more than a passing glance. For indeed it was the unfortunate Robert Dudley, Earl of Warwick, as he said, and Duke of

Northumberland by grace of the emperor, who lived here for many years, dying here at last by Arno, far from the fresh woods of Warwickshire, in the year of the king's murder, 1649.[1]

Sir Robert Dudley, born in 1572, was the son of the Earl of Leicester by his second wife, born a Howard, the widow of Lord Sheffield. The marriage, however, for many reasons, chiefly political, had been solemnised in secret, and Leicester, fearing possibly to lose his influence with Queen Elizabeth, never acknowledged it. Indeed before long he was living clandestinely with Lettice, widow of the Earl of Essex. For the first five years of his life Dudley remained in his mother's keeping, but about 1578 she seems to have married Sir Howard Stafford of Grafton, finding in him a protector, and her son was immediately taken into the home of his father, who soon publicly married Lady Essex. The Earl of Leicester died in 1588, leaving a considerable property—Leicester House in the Strand, later Essex House, for instance—to "my base son Robert," while Kenilworth was left to his brother the Earl of Warwick and a huge property to his wife Lettice.

A year later the Earl of Warwick died and Robert Dudley succeeded to Kenilworth, and not believing himself base-born, claimed and used the title of Earl

[1] Very little has been written concerning this extraordinary man. In 1849 the Rev. Dr. Vaughan Thomas, Vicar of Stoneleigh in Warwickshire, printed *The Italian Biography of Robert Dudley*, but he did not publish it, and it is full of mistakes and omissions. It was not till eleven years ago when the late Mr. Temple Leader published his *Life of Robert Dudley, Duke of Northumberland* (Firenze, Barbèra), that any serious attempt was made to tell the adventurous story of this great Englishman. Even this excellent and indispensable book is far from complete, and, being published in Florence, did not receive the attention it deserved.

VILLA CORSINI

of Warwick, by which in Italy he was known all his life. Educated at Christ Church, Oxford, where he was entered as *Comitis Filius* in the year of his father's death, three years later he was betrothed to Frances Vavasour, one of Queen Elizabeth's maids of honour. The Queen, however, forbade the marriage on account of Dudley's youth, it is said. Whether from this cause or from a love of adventure Dudley about this time began his career as a sailor. He studied navigation, built some ships, and engaging the best pilots he could find, set out for El Dorado. He took the Island of Trinidad, seems to have discovered Guiana, of which he made a map, publishing it later in his book, *L'Arcano del Mare*, and after a fight with some Spanish galleons, returned to England not without booty. He then seems to have served in the Royal Navy, in the absence of his uncle, the Earl of Nottingham, taking command of the fleet in 1596, while in the following year he led the vanguard in the fight at Cadiz; and other adventures he had too, till, when Calais was taken by Mendoza, he was put in command of the English ships sent to the rescue. He seems to have been almost famous. Of the voyage to the Indies, for instance, the Rev. Richard Hackluyt asked him for a narrative. Perhaps a part of it will not be too much out of place here.

"I weighed ancker from Southampton road the 6th of November, 1594. Upon this day my selfe in the 'Beare,' a ship of 200 tunnes, as Admirall; and captaine Munck in the 'Bear's Whelpe,' Vice-Admirall; with two small pinnesses, called the 'Frisking' and the 'Earwig,' I passed through the Needles and within two dayes after bare in with Plimmouth. But I was enforced to returne backe. Having parted company with my Vice-Admirall, I went alone wandering on my voyage, sailing along the coaste of Spaine, within view

of Cape Finisterre and Cape St. Vincent, the north and south capes of Spaine. In which space, having many chases, I could meet with none but my countreymen or countrey's friends. Leaving these Spanish shores, I directed my course, the 14th December, toward the Isles of the Canaries. Here I lingered twelve days for two reasons: the one, in hope to meete my Vice-Admirall; the other, to get some vessel to remove my pestered men into, who being 140 almost in a ship of 200 tunnes, there grew many sicke. I tooke two very fine caravels under the calmes of Tenerif and Palma which both refreshed and amended my company, and made me a fleet of three sailes. . . . Thus cheared as a desolate traveller, with the company of my small and newe erected Fleete I continued my purpose for the West Indies.

"Riding under this White Cape two daies, and walking on shore to view the countrey, I found it a waste, desolate, barren and sandie place, the sand running in drifts like snow and very stoney; for so is all the countrey, sand upon stone (like Arabia Deserta and Petrea) and full of blacke venemous lizards, with some wild beasts and people which be tawny Moores so wilde, as they would but call to my caravels from the shore who road very neere it. I now caused my master Abraham Kendall to shape his course directly for the Isle of Trinidad in the West Indies; which after twenty-two days we descried and the 1st Feb. came to ancker under a point thereof called Curiapan, in a bay which was very full of pelicans, and I called it Pelican Bay. About three leagues to the eastward of this place we found a mine of Mercazites, which glister like golde (but all is not golde that glistereth), for so we found the same nothing worth, though the Indians did assure us it was Calvori, which signifieth golde with them. These Indians are a fine shaped and a getlen

people, all naked and painted red, their commanders wearing crowns of feathers. These people did often resort unto my ship, and brought us hennes, hogs, plantans, pinos, tobacco, and many other pretie commodities which they exchanged with us for hatchets, knives, hookes, belles and glasse buttons. The countrey is fertile and ful of fruits, strange beasts and foules, whereof munkies, babions and parats were in great abundance.

"Right against the northern part of Trinidad, the maine was called the high land of Paria, the rest a very low land. Morucca I learned to be ful of a greene stone called Tacraao, which is good for the stone. Caribes I learned to be man-eaters or canibals and great enemies to the Islanders of Trinidad. In the highland of Paria I was informed by divers of these Indians, that there was some Perota, which with them is silver and great store of most excellent cane tobacco. . . . I was told of a rich nation that sprinkled their bodies with the powder of golde and seemed to be guilt and that farre beyond them was a greate toun called El Dorado with many other things. . . . And after carefully doubling the shoulder of Abreojos I now caused the Master (hearing by a pilote that the Spanish Fleete ment to put out of Havana) to beare for the Meridian of the yle of Bermuda hoping there to find the Fleete. The Fleete I found not, but foule weather enough to scatter many Fleetes which companies left me not, till I came to the yles of Flores and Cuervo; whither I made the more haste hoping to meet some great Fleete of Her Majestie my Sovereigne as I had intelligence, and to give them advise of this rich Spanish Fleete; but findinge none, and my victuals almost spent, I directed my course for England."

Such was Robert Dudley, Earl of Warwick. Home again, he fell in love with and married a sister of

Thomas Cavendish. She died in 1596 without children. Then he married the daughter of Sir Thomas Leigh of Stoneleigh in Warwickshire and by her had four daughters. His fight for his honour had begun certainly in 1596, when he began proceedings to clear his mother's reputation and to establish his right to his titles and estates. At first he thought to be successful, but the great families of Essex and Sydney were too strong for him. They got the case transferred to the Star Chamber, which ordered "all depositions to be sealed up and no copies taken". Indeed the court only admitted the evidence of Lady Essex. This scoundrelly business was set right, so far as it could be set right, later by Charles I.[1] Seeing that he was not like to get a hearing from the Star Chamber, much less justice, Dudley left England. Not alone, however, for with him went his cousin Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of Sir Robert Southwell. At Lyons they were received into the Catholic Church, and obtaining the Popes' dispensation from the laws of consanguinity, were married. Poor Lady Alice, it is said, vainly offered to join him with her four girls and to become a Catholic.

Later James I., in a Scotch passion, roundly accuses the Pope of having "*disgiunto da quella Donna che Egli meno seco, et io per me lo terrò sempre incapace d'ogni honore,*" in vain of course. The king deceived himself; for all the Pope knew Dudley was unmarried, all he did was to give him a dispensation from the law of the Church regarding consanguinity.

From Lyons Dudley soon set out with the beautiful Elizabeth Southwell for Florence. In a letter written

[1] See the Letter Patent conceding to Alice Lady Dudley the title of Duchess in England.—Temple Leader, *Life of Robert Dudley, Duke of Northumberland* (Florence, 1896), p. 200. Here Dudley's legitimacy is established and declared.

in French and in the third person he offers his services to the Grand Duke and asks for his protection. Speaking of himself, after explaining who he is and recounting his misfortunes :—

"Premierement, sans deroger au merite d'aulcun il n'est second a aucun Capitaine de mer, qui soit en Angleterre ce jour d'huy son experience admirable au faict de la navigation par toutes les regions de l'univers, ne peust (si je l'ose dire sans reproche) recevoir paragon. En second lieu il s'est estudie particulierement a cest art des le temps que l'age l'a rendu capable d'y pouvoir vacquer ; les instruments a ce faicts, la plus part de son invention et industrie luy montent en frais a la somme di 7000 scudi (*ecus*).

"En troisieme lieu il a grande experience et practique aux Indes, comme ayant este luy mesme, sur les lieux dont il cognoist tous les secrets et particularites comme aussy par la communication des avis iornalliers de ces quartiers la, dont la feu Reyne, par sa faveur et le grand Admiral son oncle luy faisoient part avec tous leurs proiects et desseins la dessus.

"Il est admirablement verse a la charpenterie d'une navire de guerre, dont l'usage n'est quiere cognu ce jourd'huy avec les perfections et secrets, qui la peuvent rendre tres absolue.

"Il fera voir a Vostre Altesse par des raisons peremptoires et assurees par quel moyen tres-facile et sans grands frais, elle pourra obtenir la dessus et se rendre bien tost seigneur absolu sur la mer de Levant malgre toutes les galeres espagnoles, infideles et autres, qui voudroient entreprendre contre Vostre Altesse Serenissime. Il pretend luy mesme d'avoir deux ou plus de navires pour guerroier les infideles et trafficquer en telles marchandises et regions du monde, que l'occasion et proffit luy conseillera. . . ."

It was thus as a sailor that Dudley claimed to serve

the Grand Duke of Tuscany. Ferdinando II. made inquiries of Lotti, his minister in London, who replied after speaking of the whole affair and describing Dudley as "of exquisite stature, fair beard and noble appearance," that the real reason King James was angry with him was that "His Majesty does not want Catholic subjects, especially when they are brave and worthy men". This was enough for Ferdinando, who at once took Dudley into his service and established him in Leghorn, where he at once began to build the ships he had promised. There he launched the *San Giovanni*, of which he himself says "she was a strong and rare sailer, of great repute, and the terror of the Turks in these seas". His plans and designs attracted notice too even in England. In March, 1607, Lotti, who was not too friendly disposed, wrote to the Grand Duke, "H.E. (Sir Thomas Challoner) showed me the design of a ship made in Leghorn by the Earl of Warwick, and he also showed me another which he said was more perfect than any".[1] And a little later we hear of King James sending an order for Dudley to return, promising him the title of Earl of Warwick.[2] Dudley, however, made no sign; he was smarting still under the ignominy that had been thrust upon him. He remained in Tuscany, and "thanks to him," says Mrs. Ross, "Leghorn became a great commercial port. He induced the Grand Duke to build fortifications, to declare it a free port, and to allow an English factory to be set up. The draining of the marshes between Leghorn and Pisa was also suggested by him."

All this time Dudley was living partly at Leghorn and partly at the Villa Corsini, which had been placed at his disposal by the Grand Duke. He was busy also with his books. There he wrote the *Arcano del Mare*,

[1] *Cf.* Temple Leader, *op. cit.*, p. 57.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 59 and app. xiv.

published in Florence in 1646-47. Other works, too, he wrote, some of which seem to be lost while others remain in manuscript. One is entitled the *Direttorio Marittimo;* it is written in very poor Italian. Another is called *How to Bridle the Exhorbitances of Parliament,* and to it one may perhaps trace many of the later unfortunate methods of government in Tuscany. Among the counsels he gives the Grand Duke are the following: "Imprimis, that none wear arms or weapons at all either in City or Country, but such as your Majesty may think fit to privilege, and they to be enrolled; 2nd. That as many Highways as conveniently may be done, be made passable through those Cities and Touns fortified, to constrain the Passengers to travel through them; 3rd. That the soldiers of Fortresses be sometimes chosen of another Nation, if subject to the same Prince; but howsoever, not to be born in the same Province or within forty miles or fifty of the Fortress and not to have Friends or Correspondency near it; 4th. That all the Gates of each walled Toun be appointed officers, not to suffer any unknown Passenger to pass without a Ticket, showing from whence he came and whither he go. And that the Gates of each City be shut all Night and keys kept by the Mayor or Governor; 5th. Also Innkeepers to deliver the names of all unknown Passengers that lodge in their Houses; and if they stay suspiciously at any time to present them to the Governor." He also suggests the building of a fort in each city so that it shall be commanded.

So he lived in Florence really very happily with Elizabeth Southwell, "the handsome Mrs. Sudel, whom he carried away with him out of England, and is here taken for his wife," as Lord Herbert of Cherbury says, when he found him there. He had a palace, too, in the city, just opposite the Palazzo Strozzi. And the

Grand Duke loved him and called him friend and Earl of Warwick. He seems to have lost nothing by his exile, save those lands which it would possibly have cost him his head to claim. So he lived, till one day in 1620 the Emperor Ferdinand II. to please his sister, the Grand Duchess Maria Maddalena, whose Grand Chamberlain Dudley was (and he was the Grand Chamberlain of three Grand Duchesses), created him Duke of Northumberland. Many and great as have been the insolences of the emperors, this might seem to beggar them. What shadow of jurisdiction had the Emperor ever dared to claim in England? It is part of our glory that we never came under the shadow of that ghostly empire. When in 1416 the Emperor Sigismund came to England to see what he might get out of Harry V., young Humphrey Duke of Gloucester, champion of England, in performance of the ancient ceremony rode into the sea with his sword drawn, before the Emperor had disembarked, and demanded "whether he came merely on a friendly visit or in his imperial capacity to claim suzerainty over the country; and it was not till a denial of all imperial rights over King Henry had been given that the visitor was allowed to land".[1] When we remember the never-ceasing quarrels that the emperors lighted or fanned in Italy, when we think of those unspeakable barbarians the selected representatives of a people that even yet are not worthy of freedom, it is with a real joy and thankfulness we may remember what in this matter our Fathers did. And truly when in the seventeenth century we find that shadow of a shadow, the ghost of a ghost, claiming a power which even the greatest of his predecessors never had, it is

[1] *Cf.* Vickers, *Humphrey Duke of Gloucester* (Constable, 1907), p. 37.

enough that we should be amused at his insolence, and a little scornful of the Englishman, who, whatever his wrongs, could stoop to accept from the hands of this foreigner the stolen shadow of a coronet. Henceforth he might masquerade as Duke of Northumberland, in such a place as Tuscany, but he would never dare to bear that title in England, nor, had he been pardoned, could he have stood in the peerage of England without shame. He was the vassal of the Emperor.

Dudley died at Villa Corsini in 1649. He was buried in the Convento di Boldrone at Quarto close by. Nothing to-day remains to mark his resting-place.

Of his twelve children, Mrs. Ross tells us, "the eldest, Maria, married the Prince of Piombino; Maria Maddalena became the wife of Malaspina Marchese d'Olinola, High Steward to Queen Christina of Sweden; and Teresa married the Duca della Cornia. Robert, the eldest son, died a few days before he attained his majority, and his mother was so affected by his loss that she followed him to the grave within a few weeks, to the intense grief of her husband. The second son, Charles, was an unmannerly scapegrace who gave his father infinite trouble. He married a French woman, Marie Madeleine, daughter of Charles Antoine Gouffier, Marquis de Braseux and Seigneur de Crevecour."

It was however to Lady Alice, Dudley's lawful wife in England, that justice was done, such justice as was possible by the White King himself. So in the "Letters Patent," from which I have already quoted, we read: ". . . And whereas our dear Father (James I.) not knowing the truth of the lawful birth of the said Sir Robert (as we piously believe) granted away the titles of the said Earldoms to others which we now hold not fit to call in question, nor ravel into our deceased father's actions; especially they having been

so long enjoyed by those families, to whom the honours were granted (which we do not mean to alter). And yet, we having a very deep sense of the great injuries done to the said Sir Robert Dudley, and the Lady Alice Dudley and their children; and that we are of opinion that in justice and equity these possessions so taken from them do rightly belong unto them or full satisfaction for the same; and holding ourselves in honour and conscience obliged to make them reparation now as far as our present ability will enable us; and also taking into our consideration the said great estate, which the said Lady Alice Dudley had in Kenilworth, and sold at our desire to us at a very great under-value[1] and yet not performed or satisfied, to many thousand pounds damage.

"And we also casting our princely eye upon the services done unto us by Sir Richard Leveson knight of the Bath who hath married the Lady Catherine, one of the daughters of the said Duke, by his said wife the said Lady Alice Dudley; and also the great services which Robert Holburne Esq. hath done to us by his learned pen and otherwise (which said Robert Holburne hath married the Lady Anne one other of the daughters of the said Duke by his said wife the Lady Alice Dudley).

"We have conceived ourselves bound in honour and conscience to give the said Lady Alice and her children such honour and precedence, as is, or are, due to them in marriage or blood. And therefore we do not only give and grant unto the said Lady Alice Dudley, the title of Duchess Dudley for her life, in England and other our realms and dominions with

[1] It was sold to Henry Prince of Wales for £14,500, truly a great undervalue. Even of this only £3,000 was ever paid, "if any at all," as the king says. *Cf.* Temple Leader, *op. cit.*, app. ii.

such precedencies as she might have had if she had lived in the dominion of the Sacred Empire (as a mark of favour unto her and out of our Prerogative Royal which we will not have drawn into dispute); but we do also further grant unto the said Lady Katherine and Lady Anne, her daughters the places, titles and precedencies of the said Duke's daughters, as from that time of their said father's creation, during their respective lives, not only in England, but in all other our kingdoms and dominions, as a testimony of our princely favour and grace unto them, conceiving ourselves obliged to do much more for them if it were in our power, in these unhappy times of distraction.

"And we require all persons of honour, and other our loving subjects, especially our Earl Marshall, Heralds and Officers at Arms, to take notice of this our friendly pleasure and to govern themselves accordingly. . . .

"To witness whereof we have caused these our Letters to be made Patent.

"Written Ourself at Oxford, the three and twentieth day of May in the twentieth year of our reign.

"CHARLES R."

XVIII

SIECI, TORRE A DECIMO, DOCCIA, S. BRIGIDA, OPACO, THE MADONNA DEL SASSO, AND TREBBIO

THERE is no lovelier road in the country about Florence than that which, leaving Val d'Arno at Sieci, climbs slowly at first through the narrow valley to the village of Mulino del Piano, and turning there to the right mounts precipitately toward Doccia, and winding across the bare austere valleys in the hills leads you at last to S. Brigida under the famous sanctuary of Madonna del Sasso. Thence your way lies as you will, north or south. To the north lies Monte Senario and the valley of the Mugnone, and a good road high up on the western side of Montereggi brings you through Saletta to Fiesole and the tramway. Turning southward from S. Brigida you pass by a way certainly not less beautiful through Castel Trebbio and Serravalle, coming again into the valley of the Sieci at Mulino del Piano and winning Val d'Arno at Sieci. It is a long journey, and beautiful as the world is among those lonely untrodden hills, different as it seems to me from any other landscape about Florence, more severe and solemn perhaps and yet with something original about it, for any but a good walker it is too far to seek it out. It is true you may go so far as Sieci on the line to Arezzo by train, and

that will save the most tedious part of the journey, but unless you be very sure of your feet it is best to go by carriage, the lightest that may be, with a good horse too, for the hills are many and steep: even then the most enthusiastic walker may have his fill, for no horse or pair of horses neither, can pull you over those hills. Yet for all the difficulty of the way, I for one would not miss it for the world. For there be treasures, look you, on those barren hills, pictures and carved wonders, and sanctuaries in the woods and hermitages in the mountains, and these are not the least holy or the least beautiful places in the world. So by road or by rail, by carriage or afoot, somehow or other you will take the road, maybe, that leads to Sieci and to the hills above the valley.

Sieci itself is a little moon-shaped place standing really out of the Arno, where it curves beautifully about an old weir that fills her streets with its music. Just there, you turn out of Via Aretina between the houses sharp to the north, the clearer music of another stream in your ears, the Sieci, which you are to follow to its source under Madonna del Sasso. And truly in all Tuscany there is no road more lovely than this by-way into the mountains. You follow it first for more than two miles, mounting gently all the way, beside the clear delicious brook of Sieci, almost an English stream in its clearness, its free impetuous song, its never-ended melody. For while most of the torrents of Tuscany are but dry beds full of stones in the long summer under that fierce and golden sun, this stream at least sings all the summer through, dashing over the boulders and among the rocks, clear as the sky itself, winding down its beautiful way between high banks, grass-grown and scattered with flowers, through woods, through meadows, to lose itself at last, a mild virgin all of silver in Arno's furious gold. Ever as you pass upward,

slowly and gently as though reluctant to win to the asperity of the bare hills, you hear her childish innocent song, the pure song of a real mountain stream that has looked only on the sun, the sky, the stars and the flowers tossing in the wind and the trees that have answered her melody. You come to an old mill with a high wooden bridge half ruined that still staggers across the rocks among which she sings; and then suddenly, in a little plain, like a cup almost, really under the hill, at last you find yourself in the village of Mulino del Piano, where the road divides at the foot of Monte di Croci.

Mulino del Piano, or properly Mulino del Piovanoe is the little village which has sprung up about the Pieve of S. Martino a Sieci, a church which has stood here certainly since the thirteenth century. No doubt the first settlement was made here under the protection of Torre a Decimo, the great palace, half fortress, half villa, which rises out of the midst of a round wood above the village; and then later, as life became more secure, the people began to live at Sieci, at the end of the valley, where the stream joins Arno, and there is, as we have seen, a great weir and a good fishery. Nothing remains to-day of any value in S. Martino which not long since has suffered a restoration; but the remains of Torre a Decimo where of old the Salterelli lords of all this country dwelt, are not without interest. Yet indeed it is rather the aspect of these places which in truth have lost everything but their beauty that appeals to us than their fragmentary and obscure story.

Perhaps the most famous of the Salterelli were the two Simone; one Simone di Guido, a Dominican, Prior of S. Maria Novella, and in 1317 Bishop of Parma, in 1323 Archbishop of Pisa, where he died, eighty years old, in 1342. Another Simone, a nephew

of the first and a Dominican too, was a good theologian and "maestro del sacro palazzo".[1] He obtained the mitre in 1385 and died in 1408) Bishop of Trieste. He was the last of the family, whose possessions passed to the Pazzi and the Salviati. Among these possessions was Torre a Decimo and the Oratory of S. Simone there, which since 1835, when Girolamo di Francesco de' Pazzi re-dedicated it, has been called S. Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi.[2] Rebuilt in great part by the Pazzi not long after they came into possession of it, the oratory we see to-day has suffered many a restoration, yet it is interesting still even in its architecture. Within, the roof *a cavalletti* is painted, and in 1905 were discovered, on the south wall of the nave, two fifteenth century frescoes representing the martyrdom of S. Sebastian and of another saint—it may well be S. Simone.

The road, as I have said, divides at Mulino del Piano, and we leave the Sieci, to find it again later at S. Brigida, following the way to the right, beside another brook, the torrent of Rimaggio. After passing between the vineyards for about half a mile, the road suddenly turns to the right and begins to climb in earnest, and, indeed, it is uphill all the way to Doccia, that village beside the road almost, as it seems, at the top of the hill. Doccia is really only a scattered handful of houses about the very ancient church of S. Andrea. This church was once in the patronage of the Bishops of Florence, until in 1018 Bishop Ildebrando gave it to the monks of S. Miniato al Monte with other places. This gift was not only confirmed in 1024 by the Emperor Henry VI., but the successors

[1] See *L'Illustratore Fiorentino*, vol. v. (Firenze, 1908), pp. 63-67.

[2] For a sketch of the life of this saint, see my *Florence and Northern Tuscany* (Methuen, 1907), p. 257.

of Bishop Ildebrando gave the government of the place also to the monks, as appears in a Bull of Pope Lucius III. in 1184. The feudal system in Italy was in these country places at any rate very strongly rooted. Even in 1293 we find the men of Doccia, in spite of the renunciations of the See of Florence, protesting their vassalage and swearing fealty to Bishop Andrea, represented by his *sindaco*. Our interest in the church to-day, however, is set in the charming blue and white terra-cotta tabernacle which it still keeps, set in the northern pillars of the chancel arch, a work of the school of the della Robbia, where two angels bow before the tiny door of the temporary abode of Jesus; and in the beautiful altar-piece in the Oratory to the north of the church where the Compagnia di S. Giovanni still gather to pray. There still over the altar this picture, painted, perhaps, by some pupil of Ghirlandajo, makes a sunshine in a shady place. On a great throne, somewhere in the world, S. Anna sits like some marvellous sibyl, and on her knees is Mary Madonna, Virgo Virginum, and in her arms is the Prince of Peace. On either side stand the two Saints John, S. Giovanni Battista and S. Giovanni Evangelista. The picture is dated 1503.

Leaving Doccia, you return a little on the way you have come, till just before a group of houses a road turns sharply off to the right: you follow it, and though at first it is easy, you will not go a mile along that way before it becomes both difficult and steep. And this is the way of mountains—that they try to break your heart before they give you of their best. You wind down into some beautiful absolutely still and silent valley, only to climb out of it; you wind about through the olive gardens; you follow through the vineyards, and it is at last only after climbing what seems to be

a precipice that you win to Parga, and a little later, by a way less difficult, to Fornello. Now, God forbid that I, of all men in the world, should magnify difficulties or make mountains out of molehills. If you be afoot the way is as easy as another, but if you be driving, see that you have a good horse and be prepared to help him in the hard places. And then, have I not said it is one of the fairest ways in Tuscany? And so indeed it will prove for you too if you have the courage to face it. For one by one the mountains stand back, the valleys open, the hills are gathered together on either side, and between, far and far away down a magical staircase all of grey and green and gold, where the olives are silver under the blue sky and the world is all Danae to the Sun, lies Val d'Arno, the valley of our hills. And yet I, who have seen it all and loved it not less than another, am but dumb when I should be most eloquent. How may I tell then of the gesture of the hills, or the serenity and certainty of those lonely heights that, as it were, in some incomprehensible rhythm fall away so surely and so magically as though in them God had expressed some phrase of music, perfect in His heart, unheard till then, as indeed He has. No, I cannot speak of that majesty of a world that is, as it were, the only visible God, the only gesture—full of goodwill or enmity—that God has thought to make to us in the silence which we cannot break.

So, at last, on the difficult road you come to the straggling precipitous village of S. Brigida, named after the sister of S. Andrew who, as I have told,[1] came from Ireland to comfort him when he lay dying at Fiesole in 875.

It seems that when S. Andrew was dead Brigida determined not to return home, but to seek out some

[1] See p. 4 *et seq.*

lonely place on the hills and wait till another angel came to bring her once more where her brother was. And so she found her way to these lonely mountains, and even to this very place which for so long has borne her name. The little village to-day possesses a church dedicated to her, but it is not there but in the hills above the village that her grotto will be found. Here, close under a greater sanctuary, that of Madonna del Sasso, founded some six hundred years after her death, Brigid lived alone in the forest. The cave is just under the eastern wall of the church; you may reach it by a flight of steps from the priest's garden. Over the little altar you may read—

> Grotta nella quale S. Brigida sorella di S. Donato
> Faceva penitentiis nel secolo nono.

And, in spite of its mistake, for she was the sister of Andrew and not of Donatus, one is glad to find that she is not forgotten. Nor is she: for before the church itself some one, who loved her, has set up a statue where on the pedestal you may read how she came from far Scotia to bring joy into Italy.

Following the road round the valley you come presently to Opaco, Lo Baco, or Lubaco, Castel Lobaco, for it was called by all these names, where is the Pieve of S. Martino. Bulls published by Pasquale II. and Innocent II. in 1103 and 1134, confirming to the Bishops of Fiesole the Church of S. Gervasio and the neighbouring church of S. Miniato, prove that at that time the place was called La Corte in Alpiniano.[1] Later, the Church of S. Gervasio having fallen into ruin, its baptistery was transferred to the Church of S. Martino, which for long was under the patronage of the Servites of Monte Senario, who possessed for a time also the great sanctuary of Madonna del Sasso.

[1] *Cf.* Repetti, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., p. 796.

To reach this famous sanctuary you must turn sharply to the right just beyond Opaco, and presently, climbing somewhat steeply, you find yourself approaching the great mass of white buildings which surrounds one of the holiest shrines in Tuscany.

It seems that towards the end of the fifteenth century[1] there lived a shepherd whose name was Ricovera. He was a widower and sick, but he had two children whom he sent every day over the mountains to guard his sheep. Good as they were, as they led the sheep from pasture to pasture they often passed an ancient tabernacle where was a picture of Mary, and there they were used to say an Ave. And she who loves so well the simple of heart, one summer day—it was the 2nd of July, 1490, and her Festa of the Visitation—appeared to them, ah, the very light of Paradise, the Jesus Parvulus in her arms, and beside her two angels. The children fell on their knees, but she seated herself on a stone hard by, and they seemed to hear her say ever so gently that they should fear nothing, that she was their heavenly mother. Then she told them how that she wished a church to be built there in her honour, and bade them go and bring their father, for she wished to speak also to him of this church. And when they answered that he was sick in bed, she bade them again to call him since he was already healed. And in truth it was even so, and when Ricovera came Madonna gave him also her order to build the church, and vanished away.

Very swiftly the joyful news spread through the neighbouring villages, and many and many came to the blessed stone from all parts. And on the Sunday in the octave of the Assumption, Mary, wishing to con-

[1] For all that concerns the Madonna del Sasso, see Anon., *Il Santuario della Madonna del Sasso* (Firenze, 1884, Tip. Salani).

firm the truth of her first appearing, showed herself once more on that stone, and those who saw her seemed to hear, as it were, an exhortation that the work of her church should be begun, for to those who invoked her there she would not be indifferent. And from that day offers of help came not only from the villages round about, but from Florence and from Fiesole, and from the Mugello. Then there befell a new prodigy. For when the work was begun in order to build more easily a place was chosen some 200 paces whence the stone lay where Madonna had shown herself, and always what was built by day was by night thrown to the ground. And again a third time Mary appeared, and they heard her say that they should build nowhere save about that stone on which she stood, and if the place were narrow, she had chosen it, and if the place were rough, she had made it her own. So they began again without delay and dug foundations round about the stone, and in no long time a magnificent sanctuary rose on the hillside. And they took the picture before which the two children had recited their prayer and placed it in the tribune over the high altar, and a piece of the stone too they placed under the table of the high altar.

Now when this new church rose on the mountains, the Servites of the S. Annunziata in Florence, those servants of Mary whose sanctuary stood not so far away on Monte Senario, took the government of it, for on them depended the *Pieve* of S. Martino all' Opaco; and this was confirmed to them by a Bull of Pope Julius II. on 1st October, 1504. But because these Fathers, busied with their church in Florence, could not rightly occupy themselves with a new sanctuary, on the 23rd November, 1505, by means of the Florentine notary Domenico Guidicci, the Oratorio del

Sasso was ceded by the Fathers Priore Giovan Filippo da Pizzighettone and the Pievano of S. Martino, Antonio Zanchi, to all *i nobili e possidenti* of that *Pieve;* and Antonio Cambini Uliviero di Scipione Guadagni, Niccolò de' Pazzi and Bernardo da Castiglione accepted the guardianship of it in the name of all, and Pope Julius II. approved this in a Bull of 23rd May, 1507.

Thus the place passed into the hands of laymen, who immediately engaged a priest to serve it: who the first was is not known, but in 1507 P. Guglielmo da Ferrara, a Servite, was elected, and for 150 years the *custodi* were chosen from the Servites of the SS. Annunziata, till at last the Pope saw fit to forbid Religious to disperse themselves through all the country places, and so in 1642 the guardians elected the priest Ippolito Ridolfi, a Florentine, to be *custode*, since when the priests have always been seculars.

The church itself is in the form of a Greek cross; finely planned and well built. It is spoiled by its barocco decoration, so that the only things of real interest are the two primitive relics, the stone which is preserved under the high altar behind an iron grating, and the picture before which the children prayed. This picture is a Giottesque painting of the fourteenth century. It represents the Madonna and Child between S. John Baptist and S. Laurence, and below is a little kneeling figure, probably the donor. Loaded with crowns and jewels, it is visited every year by vast crowds of pilgrims, especially on the second Sunday in May, and on the Feasts of the Visitation and the Assumption and the 22nd of August, often too in time of need it has been borne in procession.

In the Bull in which Julius II. gave the Oratorio del Sasso to the Convent of the SS. Annunziata, we find this passage: *Propter miracula quae inibi intercessione*

Beatae Mariae Virginis operatus Altissimus quoddam Oratorium incoeptum existit, ad quod ob hujus modi miraculâ confluit multitudo fidelium, pias in eodem Oratorio eleemosinas, et oblationes offerentium. . . . Of these words we have many a confirmation. In August, 1542, when Florence and the surrounding country, and especially the Mugello, were suffering from earthquakes, the picture of the Madonna del Sasso was borne in procession to Florence. It was met at the Porta S. Gallo by the Servite Fathers, and having been carried round the Duomo and other churches, it was exposed for public veneration in the Piazza dell' Annunziata. Many gifts were offered it, among them the following: six table-cloths, four curtains, four veils for the chalice, twelve purificators, nine napkins, four corporals, a purse embroidered in gold, a flower in a vase, silken stuffs (and that the nuns of the Murate gave), eight flowers of silk, a garland of flowers of silk with three *colombine*, an *aspersorio* and two new lamps. The dyers gave fourteen great candles, four of middle size, and a quantity of wax; the porters, a mantle of brocade with the arms of the Grand Duke. And it happened, Giani tells us, that one, seeing the tabernacle pass through the Duomo, said: "What is it that upsets so many people; that causes them to waste so much money and lose so much time? Forsooth, a picture adored by poor shepherds." This wretch, according to Giani, had scarcely finished when he fell down dead.

Miracles, too, Madonna has done, not once nor twice, the last, or nearly the last, being in 1875, when on the twenty-second of August, the titular feast of the sanctuary, the canopy fell during the singing of the gospel, bringing to the ground two youths and a little girl, but no one was hurt; then a voice was heard crying "Miracle," for which cause, says one author,

the Mass being over the celebrant intoned a solemn *Te Deum*.

But the heat of the day is over, evening is coming over the hills, far and far away Florence waits for our return.

If you be on foot you will go by the straight road down the hillside from the sanctuary to S. Brigida, and crossing the highway there, follow a road down into the valley beside the Sieci to Trebbio, where there is a picture by Andrea del Castagno, and so once more to Mulino del Piano and Sieci, where you will find the evening train to Florence. But if you are driving, or being afoot are not yet weary, you will follow the road from Madonna del Sasso back to Opaco, and there, when you come to the highway, just outside the village, turn sharply to the right, and follow the road on the hillside, coming at last into the Mugnone valley, high up on the side of Montereggi at Olavo; and so through Buiano and Saletta to Fiesole and the tramway.

XIX

MONTE SENARIO

PERHAPS the pleasantest and certainly the least fatiguing way to reach the *Sacro Eremo* of Monte Senario is to drive thither—either along Via Bolognese, through Trespiano and Montorsoli to Pratolino, where you take the road to the right to L'Acquirico and thence in about three miles climb up to the sanctuary itself; or passing through Fiesole by the Via Ferrucci, follow it to Saletta, Montereggi[1] and Bojana, and just beyond L'Olavo take the road to the left, which presently joins the road to L'Acquirico at Casa del Vento. Of these two roads the better is that by Pratolino.

To reach Monte Senario without a carriage the most honourable way is to go on foot along Via Bolognese, but the easiest is to take the train from Florence so far as Vaglia, whence it is a climb of some six miles. I shall content myself here, however, with describing the way by Via Bolognese, which is, in truth, as I have said, the best of all, whether you be on foot or *in vettura*.

The Via Bolognese leaves Florence by Porta S. Gallo. It is the most ancient of all the highroads that cross the Tuscan Apennines, and was perhaps the most frequented of all between Lombardy and Tuscany. It has been very much what it is to-day since the fourteenth

[1] This way so far as Montereggi is described on p. 257 *et seq.*

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century, but it was in 1762, in the time of the Grand Duke Francesco II., that the actual road we call to-day Via Bolognese was opened. By this road of old it was five posts, thirty-six Tuscan miles, from Florence in the Grand Duchy to Filigare on the confines of the Patrimony, the post from Filigare to Logano being almost wholly in Papal territory.

Mounting steadily all the way from the city gate between villas and gardens, you pass Villa Salviati, Il Pino,[1] and Lastra, coming at last to the ancient *borgo* of Trespiano, about four miles from Florence. Here of old the nobles of Cercina and then the *Cattani* of Florence ruled and were patrons of the church once dedicated to S. Maria but now to S. Lucia, close to which stood a hospice or *spedaletto*, to which Contessa Beatrice di Capraja left a legacy in 1276, which was paid and put to good use it seems, till in 1751 the place was suppressed. The Church of S. Lucia, founded certainly in the tenth century, has kept nothing of its ancient beauty or interest, and is, indeed, scarcely worth a visit.

Leaving Trespiano the great road passes above the cemetery, which since 1784 has served as the public burial ground for the Commune of Florence. A little beyond it is the little *borgo* of Pian di S. Bartolo, close to which is the ancient Spedale di S. Bartolommeo, a hospital for pilgrims, founded already in the thirteenth century, when the Contessa Beatrice di Capraja named it also in her will. From S. Bartolommeo it is about a mile to the village of Montorsoli, where Michele d'Agnolo di Poggibonsi, called Montorsoli, was born in 1507.[2] From here it is another mile to the tabernacle, where the road climbs to Pratolino and the Villa of Prince Demidoff. It is almost im-

[1] See p. 230.

[2] *Cf.* Vasari, *Vita* di detto Scultore.

possible to get permission to see this beautiful old villa, and therefore I shall give but a brief account of it; moreover, after all it is but an incident on the road to-day which leads to the Sanctuary of Monte Senario, that convent which already you may see soaring above you far enough away as yet.

It was the Grand Duke Francesco I. who built the place, on the eastern slope of Monte Uccellatojo, in 1569, spending immense sums on the villa and gardens, which are full of statues, grottoes and fountains. It seems indeed that "the peasantry around were reduced to misery because he threw so large an amount of ground out of cultivation to make the park, and by the destruction of their cattle in hauling marble, stone and sand up the long steep hill from Florence".[1] Bernardo Buontalenti built the place and won the praise even of his brother architects, and Francesco employed the best gardeners of the day to lay out the gardens, while Francesco Petrucci, Pier Dandini and Giovanni di San Giovanni, to say nothing of Crescenzio Onofrio Romano, adorned the rooms with frescoes. Bernardo Sgrilli[2] gives us an enthusiastic account of the place. It seems there were "statues standing in niches cut out of evergreen hedges; strange animals lurking in caves which suddenly spurted water over the unwary, cunningly devised grottoes containing life-like figures or even groups; here a shepherd piped to his flock, there a knife-grinder sharpened a scythe; there was a fortress, too, whose walls suddenly became alive with soldiers firing volleys at an imaginary enemy, whilst cannon boomed from the embrasures and the

[1] *Cf.* Janet Ross, *Florentine Villas* (Dent, 1902), p. 91.

[2] Bernardo Sgrilli, *Descrizione della Regia Villa, Fontane e Fabbriche di Pratolino* (Stamperia Ducale, Firenze, 1742); *cf.* Janet Ross, *op. cit.*, p. 92, whose redaction I have for the most part been well content to use.

rattle of drums was heard. In another grotto a pretty shepherdess tripped daintily along and filled her pails with water at a well, disdaining to look at a lovesick swain who played plaintive airs on his bagpipes; Vulcan made sparks fly from his anvil; a miller ground corn at his mill; a huntsman encouraged his hounds, baying as though they were alive . . . other most beautiful and stupendous inventions, too many to tell of, were set in motion by divers hidden machines driven by water—and if any unwary visitor sat down on a bench that seemed to invite him, or took refuge from the sun in a cool grotto, streams of water would pour down on him so that he was drenched to the skin in a moment." So far had the Medici fallen. Instead of the work of Leonardo or Donatello they have come to patronise a company of toy makers, the contrivers of mechanical freaks. But since nothing now remains of all this rubbish, and the trees have outlasted the mechanical toys of Francesco, we might well forget them, but that they seemed to amuse a greater than any Grand Duke, Sieur Michael de Montaigne, who passed this way in 1580. "The Grand Duke," says he, "has used all his five senses to beautify the villa. . . . The house is contemptible as seen from afar, but very fine when you come near, though not so handsome as some of ours in France. . . . But marvellous is a grotto with several chambers; this surpasses anything we have seen elsewhere. It is all encrusted with a certain stuff they say was brought from the mountains, which is fastened on with invisible nails. Not only does the movement of water make music and harmony, but it causes various statues to move and doors to shut, animals also plunge in to drink, and other such devices. In one moment the whole grotto is filled with water, every chair squirts it over your thighs, and fleeing therefrom up the steps to

the villa, if they choose they can start a thousand jets and drench you to the skin."

Another traveller, too, an Englishman this time, has left us an account of this place. In 1645, John Evelyn passed this way on the road to Bologna. He writes in his diary; "The house is a square of four pavilions, with a fair platform about it balustraded with stone, situate in a large meadow, ascending like an amphitheatre, having at the bottom a huge rock, with water running in a small channel, like a cascade; on the other side are the gardens. The whole place seems consecrated to pleasure and summer retirement. The inside of the palace may compare with any in Italy for furniture of tapestry, beds, etc.; and the gardens are delicious and full of fountains. In the grove sits Pan, feeding his flock, the water making a melodious sound through his pipe; and a Hercules, whose club yields a shower of water, which falling into a great shell, covers a naked woman riding on the backs of dolphins. In another grotto is Vulcan and his family, the walls richly composed of corals, shells, copper, and marble figures, with the hunting of several beasts moving by the force of water. Here, having been well washed for our curiosity, we went down a large walk, at the sides whereof several slender streams of water gush out of pipes concealed underneath, that interchangeably fall into each other's channels, making a lofty and perfect arch, so that a man on horseback may ride under it, and not receive one drop of wet. This canopy, or arch of water, I thought one of the most surprising magnificences I had ever seen, and very refreshing in the heat of summer. At the end of this very long walk stands a woman in white marble, in posture of a laundress wringing water out of a piece of linen, very naturally formed into a vast lave, the

work and invention of M. Angelo Buonarotti.[1] Hence we ascended Mount Parnassus, where the Muses played to us on hydraulic organs. Near this is a great aviary. All these waters come from the rock in the garden, in which is the statue of a giant representing the Apennines, at the foot of which stands this villa."[2]

The villa thus described by Sgrilli, Montaigne and Evelyn was destroyed by Ferdinando of Lorraine in the beginning of the nineteenth century. His successor, Leopoldo II., threw down all the grottoes with their toys. In 1872 Prince Demidoff bought the place, then a ruin. He began to build, and restored some of the smaller villas in the park, but his death in 1885 seems to have put a stop to any further work.

From the Villa di Pratolino to Monte Senario is a distance of about five miles. At L'Acquirico, where the height and beauty of Monte Senario begin to appear in all their splendour, you enter the circle as it were of the sanctuary. For it was there the seven blessed founders rested by a well when they first came to the mountain; and there later Beato Amidei raised a child from the dead, anointing him with water from the fountain. At the next Cross you enter the ancient enclosure of the convent, once protected by a wall much higher than the present one. But before entering in, it may be as well to inquire into the history of this holy and beautiful place.

It was in all the turbulence and travail of the thirteenth century, when the wars of Frederic and the troubles of the Church distracted the world, that S. Francis of Assisi founded his religion for the resurrection of love among men. It is not certainly

[1] Certainly not the work of Michelangelo.
[2] Evelyn. *Diary*, vol. i., p. 190.

of any such splendour and humanity that we think when we hear the Order of Servites named, yet it was in the same century that it was born, not like the Franciscan Order, the work of a single heart full of the genius of human love, but of seven Florentines who, praying often at a certain shrine of Mary in the city, were called by the crowd I Servi di Maria—the servants of Mary. The names of these seven men were Bonfiglio Monaldi, Giovanni Manetti, Benedetto d'Antella, Bartolommeo Amidei, Ricovero Lippi Uguccioni, Gherardino Sostagni, Alessio Falconieri. It was about the time that Gregory IX. instituted the Angelus, that is to say, he ordained that three times every day the faithful should recite the Angelical Salutation. An immense enthusiasm of love and worship had suddenly seemed to grow up in the world for Mary Madonna. For some years now the Laudesi[1] with all the city in their wake had worshipped her image in the shrine at Or San Michele. Gregory himself had approved the *Ordini dei Militi Mariani* and the *Ordini di S. Maria della Mercede* for the redemption of slaves, nor was he slow to welcome the Compagnia which Florence had called, half in derision, I Servi di Maria Addolorata.

It seems that a confraternity of Laudesi had for almost a hundred years occupied themselves with an oratory called S. Maria Maggiore, built on that spot where later Giotto's tower was to rise. To this confraternity the seven citizens named above, together with others among the best families in the city, belonged. Now it happened on the Vigil of the Assumption, the 15th August, 1233, that these Laudesi were reunited in their oratory, and after solemnising the triumph of their Lady with extraordinary ardour, were persevering in the contemplation of her

[1] Laudesi—*Si conosceva col nome di Laudesi par la diuturna sua costumanza di recitare e cantare le lodi della Vergine.*

glories, when suddenly an ineffable joy overwhelmed the heart of those seven citizens, and they were rapt into ecstacy. And lo, in a globe of light from which shot forth seven tongues of fire, which descended upon the head of each of them, Madonna stood surrounded by angels, and she called sweetly to each of the seven in turn to abandon the world.

At first no one could speak, but by-and-by Monaldi, the eldest among them, began to confess the disgust he felt for this passing life and his love for eternal things, nor were they long before, finding themselves one and all in agreement, they decided to do even as Madonna had said. So on the 8th of the following September, which was her birthday, they went out of the city, led by Monaldi, to a place called Camarzia, where they stayed. One of Monaldi's first cares was to provide the Company with an expert minister of souls, so that without hindrance they might pursue the "way of high perfection". He chose the priest Giacomo da Poggibonsi, the director of the Society of the Laudesi, who later became third general of the Order, the Order of Servites. Having chosen him, Monaldi took him to the Bishop of Florence, Ardingo Trotti, to get his permission; when, as it seems, a vision of seven angels confirmed him in his willingness to give the necessary faculty. Camarzia, the place to which they had retired, was the old Campo di Marte, that is to say that open space, without the walls, where now S. Croce stands.

There, with Monaldi as the first superior, the Company became so well known and beloved that the children called out at them when they passed *I Servi di Beata Vergine Maria*, and so great was the number of the people which visited them that at last, seeing they found no silence or solitude there, Monaldi decided

to choose another place for their abode farther from the city. It seems, however, to have been Madonna herself who chose Monte Senario for them. A certain Conte Giuliano had lately left the bishop the whole of that mountain, and he, moved thereto as it is said by Madonna, gave it to the Company. It was then a mere wild upland covered with forest. The Company took possession of it on the Vigil of the Ascension, the 31st May, 1234. These, therefore, are the great Festas of the Servites: the 15th August, on which the vision appeared and the Order was born; the 8th September, on which the seven first retired to Camarzia; and the Feast of the Ascension, on which they took possession of Monte Senario. Once in possession of the mountain, where they found indeed silence and solitude enough, their first business was to build an oratory where Mass could be said. For this building they easily won the permission of Bishop Ardingo, and indeed he agreed to consecrate the place, finding it, as he said when he visited it, a new *Tebaide*. It was not Monaldi's intention to found a new Order; he founded a hermitage where he might live outside the world, as it were, with his six brethren; nor did they try to win others to their company, but remained in that solitary place in prayer and contemplation, and in adoration of the Blessed Virgin Mary whose servants they were. "It was not my intention," said Blessed Alessio Falconieri later to Pietro da Todi, "nor the intention of any of my companions to found a new Order. We did not dream that our union was only the beginning of a multitude of brethren; we thought only of joining together for divine inspiration, and so to follow more easily the will of God. It was indeed entirely the doing of Our Lady that the Order was founded, and she herself entitled it the Order of the

Blessed Virgin Mary.[1] On the 27th February, 1239, being the third Sunday in Lent, the cold was intense, and the chronicler of the Order tells us it was colder still on the height of Monte Senario. Nevertheless, as though it were mid-autumn, the vineyards were hung with grapes and the ground covered with the greenest grass, and there were flowers too as though spring were in the world. Now Cardinal Castiglioni was there on that day and with him the good Bishop of Florence, and, seeing this miracle and the love Madonna bore the place, they wept for joy, for they perceived, being holy men, how that celestial Lady would multiply her servants. And later the good bishop was the more confirmed in his thought when in Florence in the darkness of night, standing in profound prayer, he saw again that vision he had seen before. Now when Holy Week began the pious hermits were occupied with the Passion of our Saviour and the bitter sorrows of His Holy Mother, until, on the evening of Good Friday, all being come together into the oratory, their compassion grew so poignant that they all one by one burst into sudden tears. But the sorrowful Mother, surrounded by clouds of angels, came down to them, and in her hand she held a habit of black and an open book with the Rule of S. Augustine written there, and there was written, too, the title in letters of gold, the Servants of Mary, and she bore, too, a most beautiful branch of palm. Then, inviting her servants to draw near to her and holding in her hand the dark habit which she destined for them, instead of the white they had worn till then, making as though she would clothe them, she spoke thus: "I have elected you, dear ones, to be my Servants, and under this name you are to cultivate the vineyard

[1] *Cf.* P. A. S., *Il Sacro Eremo di Monte Senario sopra Firenze* (Prato, 1876), p. 32.

of my Son. Here is the habit which you are to wear for the future. Its blackness will remind you of the sorrows which I suffered bitterly in the Crucifixion and Death of my Only Son, and the Rule of Augustine, which I give you as the Rule of your life, will help you to attain this Palm which awaits you in heaven if you faithfully persevere even to the end."

Now, the bishop had seen also this very vision in Florence, and so, returning to Monte Senario, having celebrated the Mass of the Holy Spirit, he clothed them at once in the new habit given them by the celestial foundress of the Order.

Whatever their intention may have been, the news of these wonders and of the sanctity of the seven founders spread through the city; helped no doubt by the foundation about this time of a little hospice just without the city gate. The Beati soon found indeed that they could not always remain in that solitude, it was necessary to live, and to live it was necessary to beg, and therefore some of the brethren were used to come down to the city; it was for them, it seems, that the rest house which later became the church and convent of the SS. Annunziata was founded. For long it seems there had been a shrine there, when on 8th September, 1250, the little oratory of S. Maria in Caffagio as it was then called was founded. Later, with the leave of Innocent IV. and the Bishop of Florence, they enlarged the place; three citizens giving them there a piece of land for a church. Thus the SS. Annunziata was built, and within, a certain Bartolommeo Fiorentino, as it is said, painted a picture for them of the Annunciation, before which miracles began to happen.[1]

[1] For an account of SS. Annunziata, see my *Florence and Northern Tuscany* (Methuen, 1 07), pp. 259-61. And for the history of the picture and the miracles, Anon., *Miracolosa*

It was in 1253 that Filippo Benizi joined the new Order, becoming later its general. To him is due its immense success. A doctor of medicine of the University of Padua, he spent thirty-two years in the Order, a great preacher, who spoke always of peace. Nor was Juliana Falconieri, the daughter of Riguardata Falconieri, who had helped to found the Church of SS. Annunziata, behind S. Filippo in her statesmanship. She founded in 1306 the Third Order, for women—the *Mantellate.* And when S. Filippo came to die "he found none, not only among women, but in the whole Order, more fitted than Juliana to be its propagator and moderator, and to her he commended it".[1]

The convent which we see to-day, half-hidden among the woods, rising like a crown on the mountain, is interesting chiefly because it is still in possession of the Friars, and for this cause it may well charm us more than the Certosa di Val d'Ema has perhaps been able to do. They are both—if we exclude the tombs of the Certosa—without any work of art of first-rate importance. Here on Monte Senario we find a Madonna and Child, by the school of the della Robbia, and certain late pictures by Giovanni di S. Giovanni and others, almost nothing else. But then it was not to see any work of art we came so far, but partly to see the convent, still in the hands of the Order which founded it, and partly to see the hills—the hills of Tuscany.

Immagine della SS. Annunziata di Firenze (Tip. Le Monnier, Firenze, 1844).

[1] See Roman Breviary, for her Feast Day.

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